The Marker Lamp
Volume 71 • Number 3 • September 2025
SOUTHERN PACIFIC
PENNSYLVANIA
6487
Blues Express Memories
Plus:
Second Life for Freight Cars
Controlling Track Power From Two Places
Weights for Wooden Freight Cars
Building Benchwork for Your Model Railroad
The San Antonio Model Railroad Association
LSR CONVENTION
2026
CONNECTIONS
AUSTIN, TEXAS
LONE STAR REGION
NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION
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The Marker Lamp

The Official Publication of
The Lone Star Region of the
National Model Railroad
Association

Volume 71, Number 3
September 2025

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The editorial policy of The Marker Lamp, the official publication of The Lone Star Region, shall be to contribute, wherever possible, to the promotion, growth and understanding of the hobby of Model Railroading, within the confines of good taste and responsibility. The Marker Lamp is published once each quarter by and for the members of The Lone Star Region of The National Model Railroad Association. Articles appearing in The Marker Lamp are the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of the officers or membership of The Lone Star Region or The National Model Railroad Association.

Address all correspondence, news, photos and drawings to the editor. All material will be gladly accepted and will be used depending on the availability of space and suitability of material. None will be returned unless a stamped, self-addressed envelope is provided. Correspondence relating to advertising should be addressed to Steve Sandifer at steve.sandifer@sbcglobal.net.

Cover photos are from Wayne Jones' HO Scale Franklington Crossing, featured at Connections 2026. (Photos by Wayne Jones)

Submission Deadlines and Advertising Closing Dates

Spring Issue	February 15
Summer Issue	May 15
Fall Issue	August 15
Winter Issue	November 15

Materials received after the deadline may be held for the next issue.

Publication Date:
Approx. 30 days after deadline

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President's Corner

All Aboard!

by Bob Barnett, MMR
rbarnettmopac@gmail.com

First let me say I consider it a privilege and honor to serve as the president of the Lone Star Region. I want to thank Donna Orr and Chuck Lind my two immediate predecessors for doing a great job of keeping the LSR moving forward and for providing me with much-needed information on the current projects underway for the NMRA and LSR.

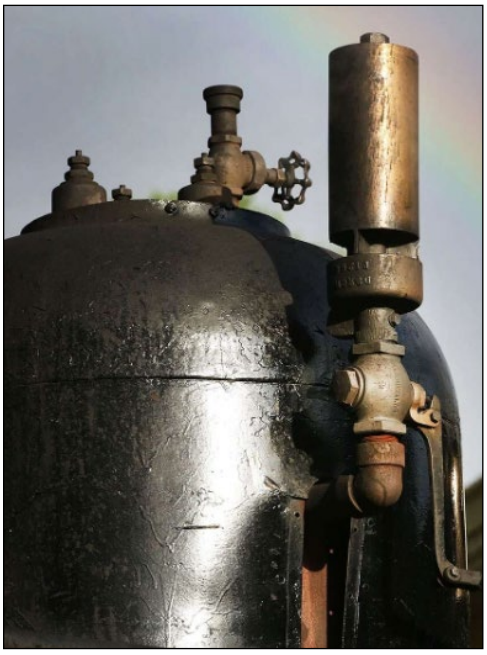
I have a great deal of interest and respect for the model railroaders and model railroad organizations all across the LSR. For this reason, I plan to continue writing articles regarding our LSR Heritage including articles regarding the various clubs around the region. As I mentioned in my qualification statement when I ran for President, I have lived in four of the eight Divisions of the LSR. I grew up in Paris, Texas in Division 3. Although we were 100 miles northeast of Dallas and about 85 miles west of Texarkana, such exotic locations as Halls Hobby Shop in Dallas and Two States Hobby Shop in Texarkana might as well have been on the moon. The same goes for visiting the legendary Texas & Rio Grande of Bill McClanahan or Marquet Union Terminal of Cliff Robinson.

But all that changed when I moved to Houston in the late seventies and discovered the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club and the Lone Star Region. I was awed by the fall layout tours that featured the layouts of Gil Freitag, The Houston Society of Model Engineers, Ken Caulking, Ed Quinn and Larry Redmond. If you have been an LSR member for very long you will recognize most of these names as being LSR Officers or Committee Chairs. I was further amazed that when you joined the NMRA/LSR you get the same entrée into the layouts of equally famous modelers in the various cities around the LSR. Thus began my fascination with and admiration of the modelers and organizations around the LSR.

A short-lived sojourn in Fort Worth in the 1980s reinforced my love of Cowtown, the "Railroad Center of Texas". At that time Division 1 had far less members than Divisions 3 and 8. This was before the BNSF headquarters move and construction of Alliance Airport, not to mention the small mid cities in Tarrant County becoming LARGE Mid-Cities in Tarrant County. Today the D-FW metropolitan area approximately equals the Houston-Galveston metropolitan area in population. But the combined membership of Divisions 1 and 3 exceeds Division 8. We probably need to work on that!! The D-FW area has hosted several excellent LSR Conventions along with "one big beautiful" NMRA national Convention. So, model railroading is definitely alive and well in D-FW (Divisions 1 and 3).

I lived is Austin for three years in the 1980's. I was on Chuck Ellis' committee for the 1988 LSR convention, the first LSR convention held in the Austin Area. I also served a couple of years as the Division 4 Representative on the LSR Board. Since that time Austin/Round Rock/Temple area has hosted several LSR Conventions. These cities being in the center of Texas' most populated area provide an ideal location for a convention. Residents of the five largest cities in Texas can reach this area in 2 to 4 hours making attendance very feasible. Then we moved back to Houston and Division 8 where I have resided for 36 years.

I wish to thank Rod Fredericks and the host committee for putting on a very enjoyable convention this June in Baton Rouge. I am pleased we have several conventions lined up at various locations around the region. Convention Chairman Joe Leising has done an excellent of spreading the "opportunity and fun" of putting on an LSR Convention. I look forward to working with the modelers in all divisions of the LSR. Well, it's time for two short blasts to "whistle off" and the train is underway. **ML**



From the Editor

And Now For Something a Little Different

by Peter Kazmir
peter@centexnmra.org

By now you may have noticed there's something a bit different about this issue of *The Marker Lamp*. That's because the design has been updated to make it easier to read. Among other things, this includes new fonts, which have been selected specifically for their readability on screen and on paper, a new layout with three left-justified columns that's better for those with dyslexia (and enables more consistent page layouts), new photo captions, and even a new standard color palette that's been selected to be color-blind safe and provide good color contrast.

(As a bonus, along the way I also updated the InDesign template to make it a lot easier to edit.)

In my day job, I'm a Director of Product Management for a cybersecurity software company. If you're not familiar, a Product Manager's role is to gather input from many sources - customers, competitors, analysts, upper management, and other groups in the business, and then distill that into a product strategy and engineering requirements that will theoretically make the business successful.

Usually (!!) this includes making the customers happy. A big part of this is providing a good user experience (especially in software): making sure your product is easy to understand, is easy to use, and does what the user wants it to do. And a big part of *that* is recognizing that different people have different needs.

For example, not everyone can read very small text, and not everyone can use a mouse. Designing user interfaces that work for everyone takes a lot of hard work, but I've found repeatedly that when you do it right, you usually end up with a product that *all* of your customers like - even those with no disabilities. After all, just because you can see really small text and you can click on a very small target with your mouse doesn't mean you would enjoy doing it all day.

So, I hope you enjoy this new design. Please let me know if you have any feedback.

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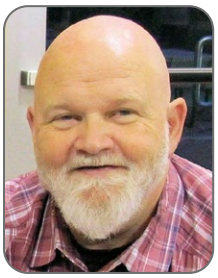
In this issue, we'll recap the 2025 Blues Express LSR Convention. I would like to echo Bob in thanking the convention committee for doing such a great job. The convention was well done, and I (and everyone I know who attended) had a great time. Well, except for the elevator - ha! (If you know, you know.) I hope we are fortunate to have future LSR conventions in Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and possibly even in other locations like Shreveport or Lake Charles.

Looking forward, the Connections 2026 LSR Convention, which will be in Austin, is coming together nicely. It looks like it will include some tours, layouts, and clinics that have never been on an LSR convention before, so I hope you can make it! **ML**



Events Calendar

by Bill Dryden
bdr149@airmail.net

Here are upcoming events within the LSR of which I am aware. I will provide all the information YOU send me or I can glean from other publications, websites, etc., for these events. Additional information may be available through the *NMRA Magazine* and/or other magazines or websites. Also, note that all show times and dates are as I have found them; all are at the discretion of the sponsoring organization and are subject to change. Please forward any and all information about upcoming events or activities in your area, club, etc., to me, via e-mail at bdr149@airmail.net.

Connections 2026

Lone Star Region NMRA Convention

June 18-21, 2026

Wyndham Garden Inn
3401 South IH-35
Austin, TX 78741

Connections2026.com

Check the website for additional information as plans for the convention continue to develop. Registration opens soon!

Make plans now to join us in Austin!

Events and Shows

September

20-21 - Temple, Texas
43rd Annual Temple Model Train & RPM Show, sponsored by the Central Texas Area Model Railroaders (Centra-MOD). Saturday 10 am - 5 pm, Sunday 10 am - 4 pm. Adults $10, $1 discount for seniors and active duty military and dependents with ID, 12 and under free (with adult). Frank Mayborn Center, 3303 N. 3rd Street, Temple, TX. More info: http://centramodrr.com/train-show/

27-28 - Plano, Texas (Dallas)
Fall Plano Train Show, sponsored by the North Texas Council of Railroad Clubs. Saturday 10 am - 5 pm, Sunday 10 am - 4 pm. Adults $11, children 12 and under free; $1 discount is given for cash. Plano Event Center, 2000 E. Spring Creek Parkway, Plano, TX. More info: https://www.dfwtrainshows.com/

October

4 - Texas City, Texas (Galveston)
GCMRRC Annual Train Festival, sponsored by the Galveston County Model Railroad Club. 10 am - 4 pm. Texas City Museum, 409 6th Street, Texas City, TX. More info: http://www.gcmrrc.org/coming-events.html

27-28 - New Braunfels, Texas
New Braunfels "Jamboree" Train Show, sponsored by the New Braunfels Railroad Museum. Saturday 10 am - 5 pm, Sunday 10 am - 4 pm. Adults $10 (13 and older), child $3 (5-12 years old). New Braunfels Civic Center, 375 South Castell Avenue, New Braunfels, TX. More information: (830) 627-2447 or https://newbraunfelsrailroadmuseum.org/nbrr/train-shows/

November

15-16 - Pearland, Texas (Houston)
Houston Area Model Train Show, sponsored by the Houston Area T-Trak Association. Saturday 10 am - 5 pm, Sunday 10 am - 4 pm. Adults $7, 17 & under free. Knights of Columbus Hall, 2320 Hatfield Road, Pearland, TX. More info: https://houstonttrak.org/show/

25-26, 28-29 - Lubbock, Texas
5th Annual Fall Show at the American Windmill Museum, sponsored by the American Windmill Museum and the Lubbock Model Railroad Association. 10 am - 5 pm. Admission is $5 per person, with kids 2 and under and AWM members getting in for free. American Windmill Museum, 1701 Canyon Lake Dr, Lubbock, TX. More information: https://lmra806.wordpress.com/

December

6-7, 13-14, 20-21 - San Antonio, Texas
Santa's Railroad Wonderland, sponsored by the Texas Transportation Museum. Open 5:30 pm - 9 pm (parking opens at 5:15 pm, last admission at 8 pm). Adults $12, Kids 4-12 $10, Kids under 4 free. Group rates available and parking is free. Texas Transportation Museum, 11731 Wetmore Road, San

Antonio, TX. More info: https://www.txtransportationmuseum.org/annualevents

January 2026

17-18 - Plano, Texas (Dallas)
Winter Plano Train Show, sponsored by the North Texas Council of Railroad Clubs. Saturday 10 am - 5 pm, Sunday 10 am - 4 pm. Adults $11, children 12 and under free; $1 discount is given for cash. Plano Event Center, 2000 E. Spring Creek Parkway, Plano, TX. More info: https://www.dfwtrainshows.com/

February

21 - Pasadena, Texas (Houston)
Greater Houston Train Show, sponsored by the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club. 10 am - 4pm. Adults $10, youth $5 (maximum $15 per household, $1 discount is given for cash). Cash and credit cards accepted at the door. 7902 Fairmont Parkway, Pasadena, TX. More info: https://sanjacmodeltrains.org/GHTS.php

March

14-15 - Grapevine, Texas (Fort Worth)
Train-a-Palooza #12, sponsored by the Lone Star Hi-Railers Model Railroad Association. Saturday, 10 am - 5 pm, Sunday 10 am - 3 pm. Adults $10, children 12 and under (and Scouts and Leaders in uniform) free. Admission good both days. Grapevine Convention Center, 1209 S. Main Street, Grapevine, TX. More info: https://lonestarhirailers.com/train-a-palooza-tm

28-29 - Dallas, Texas
Great Train Show. Saturday and Sunday 10 am - 4 pm. Dallas Market Hall, 2200 N. Stemmons Fwy, Dallas, TX. More info: https://www.greattrainshow.com/

Recurring Events and Meetings

LSR Cowcatcher Division 1 - Fort Worth, TX
The Cowcatcher Division meets on the 2nd Saturday of each month at the Texas Western Model Railroad Club, 6808 Forest Hills Drive, Forest Hills, TX. You can attend in person or via Zoom. For more information regarding the Cowcatcher Division or its programs, check their website: https://www.cowcatcherdivision.org.

LSR Bayou Division 2 - Baton Rouge/New Orleans, LA
The Bayou Division meets quarterly at different locations. For information on future meetings contact Rod Fredericks at fredericks.rod@gmail.com.

LSR Trinity Division 3 - Allen, TX
The Trinity River Division meets at 10:00 am on the 3rd Saturday of every month at the Christ Servant Lutheran Church, Allen Texas. Occasionally things change due to scheduling conflicts so pay close attention to the email meeting notices that go out a week before the meeting. If you would like to be added to the email list contact Robert Secrest at Robert.Secrest@hotmail.com.

LSR Cen-Tex Division 4 - Austin, TX
The Cen-Tex Division meets bi-monthly at the Austin Northwest Recreational Center, 2913 Northland Drive, Austin, TX. Meetings are held at 10:00 am on the 2nd Saturday of the odd months and include clinics, show-and-tell, DCC minute, social activities and a layout open house. For more information about upcoming meetings, see https://centexnmra.org or contact director@centexnmra.org to be added to the mail list.

LSR West Texas Division 5
Division 5 holds their meetings virtually on Zoom on the 3rd Monday of each month starting at 7:00 pm. Anyone that can join via Zoom is welcome to attend. Use this link to sign up for the division's monthly bulletin and keep up with events and happenings in the division: http://eepurl.com/hRLLm9 or email Headroadie2004@gmail.com.

LSR South Texas Division 6 - San Antonio, TX
The South Texas Division meets bi-monthly at the Longhorn Cafe at 12311 Nacogdoches Road in San Antonio. Meetings are held at 11:00 am on the 2nd Saturday of even months. Please come out and join us for clinics, show-and-tell, tip and tricks, and the ever-popular Deal-or-Duds, along with great fellowship and often a visit to a local home layout. For more information contact Roy Kaiser, Division Director, at fr8train@gvtc.com.

LSR Texas Gulf Division 8 - Houston, TX
The Texas Gulf Division meets the 2nd Saturday of the odd months from 10:00 am to 12 Noon at the Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Road, Houston, TX 77055. For more information contact Phil Stewart at pstewart1225@yahoo.com.

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Alamo Model Railroad Engineers - San Antonio, TX
The Alamo Model Railroad Engineers meets the 2nd Friday of the month at 7:30 pm in the Zucht Building at the Texas Transportation Museum, 11791 Wetmore Rd., San Antonio TX. For more information call (210) 490-3554 (weekends 9:00 am to 4:00 pm; voicemail only M-F) or visit the website at https://www.txtransportationmuseum.org/ho-scale-indoor-model-railroad.

All Points Model Railroad Association - Conroe, TX
The All Points North Model Railroad Association is open to new members and has business meetings in their clubhouse on the 3rd Saturday of the month at 10:30 am. For more information, including a calendar of activities, please visit their website at http://apnmrr.org/.

Austin Model Railway Society - Austin, TX
The Austin Model Railway Society is a HO scale modular group that is open to new members and meets once a month. For more information please email Steve Jackobs at president@austinrailway.org or visit the web site www.austinrailway.org. Be sure to join us in December for our annual open house at Breakfast with Santa!

The Greater Baton Rouge Model Railroaders - Jackson, LA
Our mission: to educate and inform the public on the hobby of model railroading, associated disciplines, and to entertain both children and adults through our numerous displays featuring both model trains, real railroads and railroad safety. The Trains run from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of every month! THE PUBLIC IS INVITED! Located at the Republic of West Florida Historical Museum, 3406 College St, Jackson, LA. More information: http://www.greaterbrrailroaders.com/.

Houston Area "G" Gaugers - Rosenberg, TX
The Houston Area "G" Gaugers (HAGG) model train club meets at the Rosenberg Railroad Museum on the 4th Sunday of each month to run their special trains on the tracks of the Garden Railroad Exhibit. The museum also hosts fun seasonal activities for the kids on this day. Steam engines, circus trains, patriotic trains or everyone's favorite Thomas? You never know what trains you'll see. Rosenberg Railroad Museum, 1921 Avenue F, Rosenberg, TX. More information: info@RosenbergRRMuseum.org.

Houston Area Live Steamers - Hockley, TX
HALS has over 9,000 feet of track for you to enjoy and ride on most any Saturday of the year. Someone is usually there every Saturday with special run, operations, waybills/timetable, work and fun run days scheduled throughout the year. Our public run days are the 3rd Saturday of the month March through November. Come see our 2,500 foot expansion in Phase 4. Model Railroaders (any scale) are welcome to attend most any time. Check our web site out at www.hals.org for schedule of events or e-mail Rick White at rick.white.jr@gmail.com for more information.

New Braunfels Railroad Museum - New Braunfels, TX
Kids Fun Day is held on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at the New Braunfels Railroad Museum, 302 South San Antonio Street (in the 1907 Restored Railroad Depot), New Braunfels, TX. Museum phone (830) 627-2447. Kids of all ages will have the opportunity to run model trains and become a Jr. Engineer. Also among the displays at the Kids Fun Day will be a large US Army Model Garden (G) Scale and Lego Trains. Visit our Steam Engine, Caboose, Dining Car (available for Birthday Parties) and Box Car. There will be other fun, train related activities, additional model trains, train artifacts, our 1907 depot are on display. The Railroad Museum opens at 10:00 am on Saturdays. For field trip scheduling and more information, call Susan Riordon (210) 542-6121, or visit us at www.nbrrm.org.

North Texas Council of Railroad Clubs – Irving, TX
The North Texas Council of Railroad Clubs (NTC) meets the 3rd Tuesday of the month. Visit the website www.dfwtrainshows.com for more information about the NTC, its meeting site, member clubs or sponsored events.

San Antonio Model Railroad Association - San Antonio, TX
The San Antonio Model Railroad Association, SAMRA, is open to new members and meets on the 2nd Friday of each month at 7:30 pm in the Bob Clarke Rail Heritage Museum, 7702 Narrow Pass, Live Oak, TX. Please visit our website www.samratx.org for information about our activities and their dates and times. Also, like us on Facebook.

Texas Northern Model Railroad Club – Dallas, TX (North)
The Texas Northern Model Railroad Club business meeting is the 1st Thursday of the month and has regular meetings on Thursday evenings and most Saturdays. If you like to operate, come by on Tuesday nights to join our weekly operation session. Located in North Dallas at 11999 Plano Road., Suite 154, Dallas, TX 75243. For more information: www.texasnorthern.org.

Texas Western Model Railroad Club – Forest Hills, TX
The Texas Western Model Railroad Club meets for its business meeting every 1st Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm. The Club is located at 6808 Forest Hills Drive, Forest Hills, TX. For more information: (682) 587-2092 or www.twmrc.org.

Excursion Train Trips

Austin Steam Train; Cedar Park, TX; (512) 477-8468; www.austinsteamtrain.org

Grapevine Vintage Railroad; Grapevine, TX; (817) 410-3185; www.gvrr.com

Old Hickory Railroad; Jackson, LA; (225) 634-7397; www.louisianasteamtrain.com

Texas State Railroad; Palestine & Rusk, TX; (888) 987-2461; www.texasstaterr.com

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Please consider our deadlines for submittals and publications to allow adequate lead time to correctly announce your event. Column submission deadlines are the 15th of February, May, August, and November. Publication of the Marker Lamp is the following month. **ML**

Whose Track Goes Here?

Can you figure out whose layout this photo is from?

If you're the first person to email the correct answer to rrrduino@huntatrophy.com you'll win a campfire lighting Arduino!

The photo in the June issue was of Mike Walsdorf's Louisville & Nashville.

2026 NMRA NATIONAL CONVENTION

CHATTANOOGA, TN
JULY 27 - AUGUST 2, 2026

The NMRA National Convention is coming to Chattanooga for the first time ever in 2026! The Southeastern Region is excited to host NMRA members from around the world in the Scenic City. We have a week full of fun activities planned including:

Layout Tours - Prototype Tours - Steam-Powered Excursions and Dinner Train
Non-Rail Tours and other Activities - Operating Sessions - Special Interest Groups
Railroad Historical Societies - Modeling with the Masters® - Celebration of Models
National Train Show - Banquet

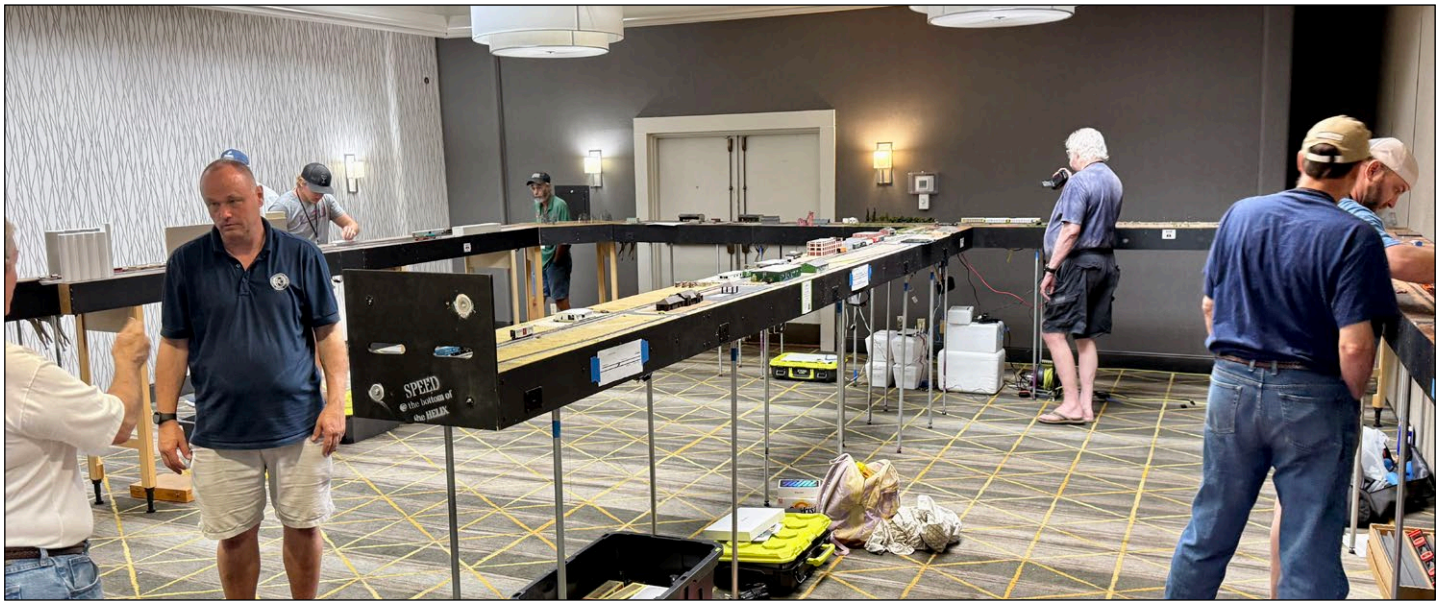
Register today at nmra2026.org!

Blues Express Memories

Photos by Clay Fourrier

Good wages, with
Experien
Write Fred Harvey
HARVEY HOUSE
THE HARVEY GIRLS
HARVEY HOUSES of TEXAS
THE HARVEY GIRLS
LESLEY POLING-KEMPES
Meal Service

UNION PACIFIC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EVERGREEN

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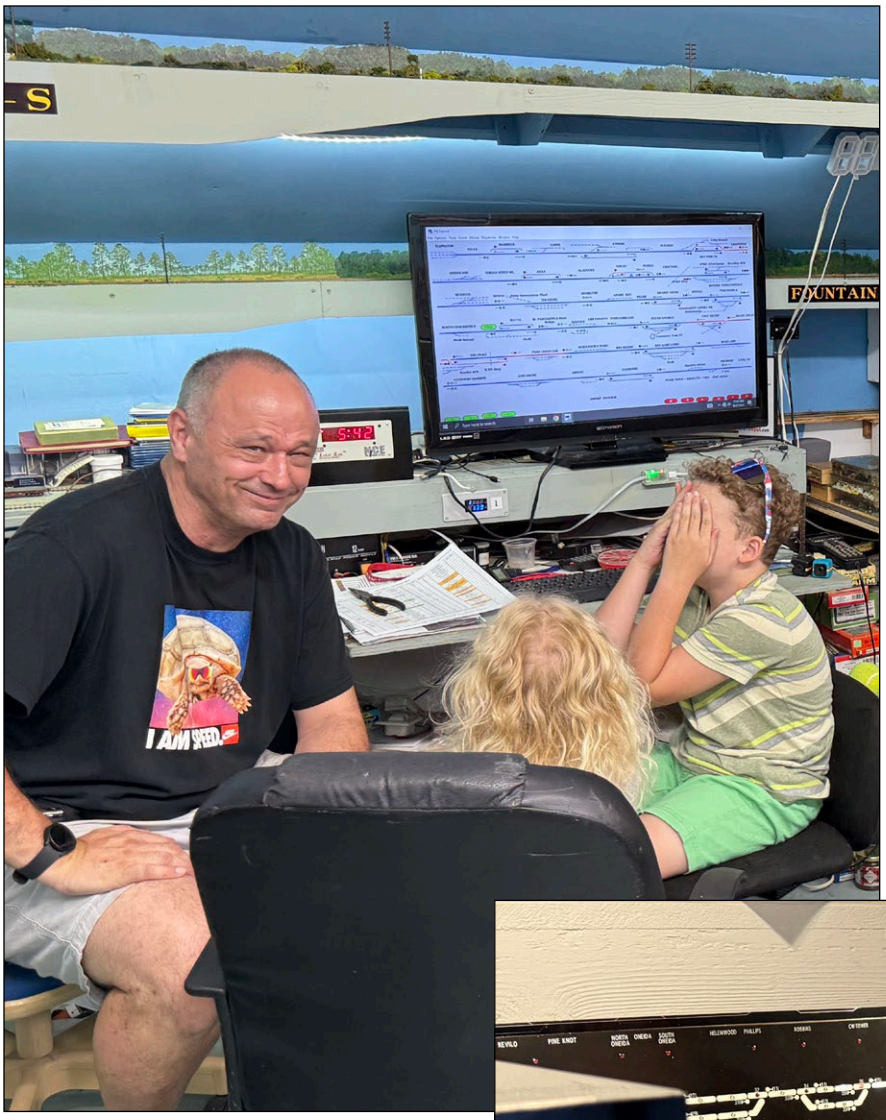
FOUNTAIN
I AM SPEED

NEVILO
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RIBBAN
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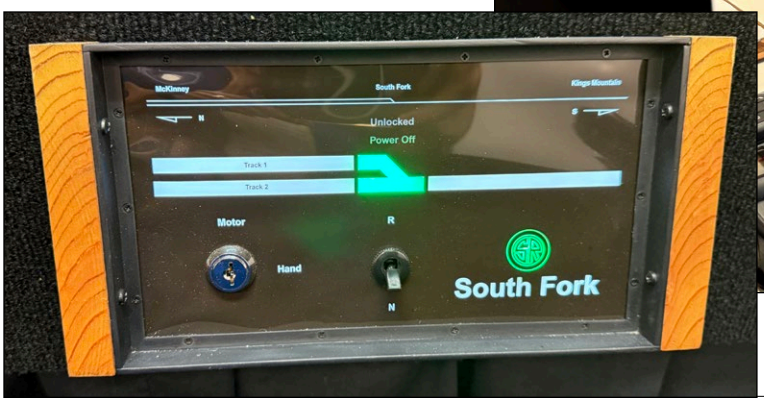
WANE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South Fork
Kings Mountain
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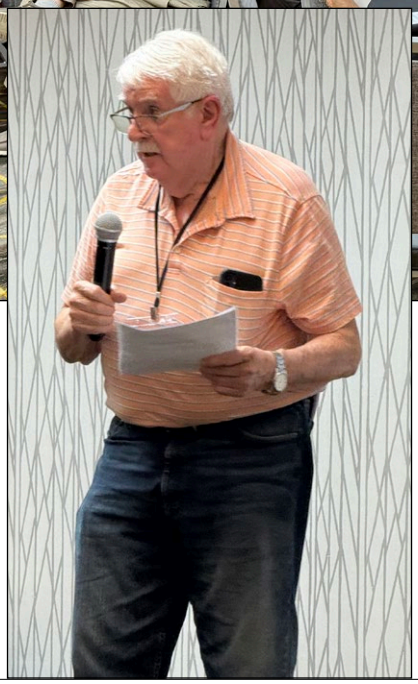
WALTER



NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION
LONE STAR REGION
YOUTH AWARD
WYATT COOK
June 2025
Houston, Texas

Computer & Technology Rentals
877-398-Rent (7368)

PETER KAZMIR
JUNE 28, 2025

U.S. ARMY
VIETNAM VETERAN
Ken
Tommy

ENJOY THE JOURNEY!
AN INTRODUCTION TO FREELANCE MODEL RAILROADING
A Clinic by Christopher Palmieri and Doug Watts
HOME SHOPS
2

HOME SHOPS
2
Premium Quality Scale Models
Customized with
YOUR BRAND!
Customer Appreciation
Safety Awards
Celebrate Key Events
Employee Recognition
Stakeholder Outreach

Contest Report

by Ray Byer & Jeff Palmer, MMR, LSR Contest Co-Chairs

Congratulations to everyone who entered the contest this year; everyone contributed outstanding work.

Special thanks goes to the contest room workers and judges, who included Dick Brannan, Ray Byer, Divina Gato-Hogno, Deborah Gifford, Russell Gifford, Jerry Hoverson, MMR, Steve Jackobs, MMR, Roy Kaiser, Jack Merkel, MMR, Tommy Naquin, Jeff Palmer, MMR, Duane Richardson, MMR, Kelly Russell, MMR, Doug Taylor, Stacy Watts, Terry Williams and Don Winn, MMR.

This year, there were 24 entries in the Model Contest, 9 in Arts & Crafts, 7 in Photography, and (sadly) none in the Special Contest, for a total of 40 entries. There were some categories with no entries - including freight cars, for the first time in 25 years.

Nine entries merited.

Don Winn, MMR, won the participation award, with 3 entries totaling 287.5 points. There was no novice entry, youth/teen awards, Bob Clarke Logging Award, Linda S. Little Award, or Tree Award.

We hope you are already working on entries for the contest at Connections 2026! We can't wait to see them! **ML**

Model Contest Winners

Steve Locomotives
None

Diesel Locomotives
1. Steve Jackobs..... Tex-Mex #502 Box Cab Engine
2. Terry Williams.... KCS F-7 Engine #70 in O Scale
3. Terry Williams.... KCS F-7 Engine #85 in O Scale

Traction & Other Motive Power
1. Jon Pitre ..... Crawler Tractor with Logging Arch
2. Jon Pitre ..... Ford 9000 Tractor

Passenger Cars
1. Don Winn ..... CB&Q 1809 RPO

Freight Cars
None

Maintenance of Way
1. Don Winn ..... "Break Time"
2. Jon Pitre ..... Bucyrus Crane

Cabooses
1. Jon Pitre ..... GM&O Wooden Caboose

On-Line Structures
1. Rod Fredericks.... Narrow Gauge Livestock Loading
2. Rod Fredericks.... Coaling Station

Off-Line Structures
1. Russell Gifford.... Circle J Country Store
2. Jon Pitre ..... Bayou Hardware
3. Jon Pitre ..... Tool Shed

Bridges & Trestles
1. Russell Gifford.... Bascule Bridge
2. Don Winn ..... US 30 Bypass Bridge

Display / Modules
1. Bob Barnett ..... Jones Family Cotton Farm
2. David Perkins ..... Military Railhead

Special Category "Cube"
None

Arts & Crafts Contest Winners

Arts & Crafts General
1. Deborah Gifford.....Magnolia on Wood
2. Janet Pitre .....Box of Cards
3. Thann Dauterive.....Beads

Arts & Crafts Railroadiana
1. Deborah Gifford.....View from the Smokey Mary
2. Janet Pitre .....All Aboard
3. Janet Pitre .....Patriotic Steam Engine

Arts & Crafts Needlework
1. Janet Pitre .....His Cross

Arts & Crafts Theme ("Blue")
1. Janet Pitre .....Blue Express
2. Divina Gato-Hogno .."The Blues" Jewelry Box

Arts & Crafts Youth & Teen Award
None

Photography Contest Winners

Prototype B&W Prints
1. Russell Gifford.... The Diamond at Hearne

Prototype Color Prints
1. David Perkins ..... C&O Steam Engine #1309
2. Mike Baker..... Faded Lady
3. David Perkins ..... Southern Steam Engine #630

Model B&W Prints
None

Model Color Prints
1. Roy Kaiser..... Nightfall at the Ridge

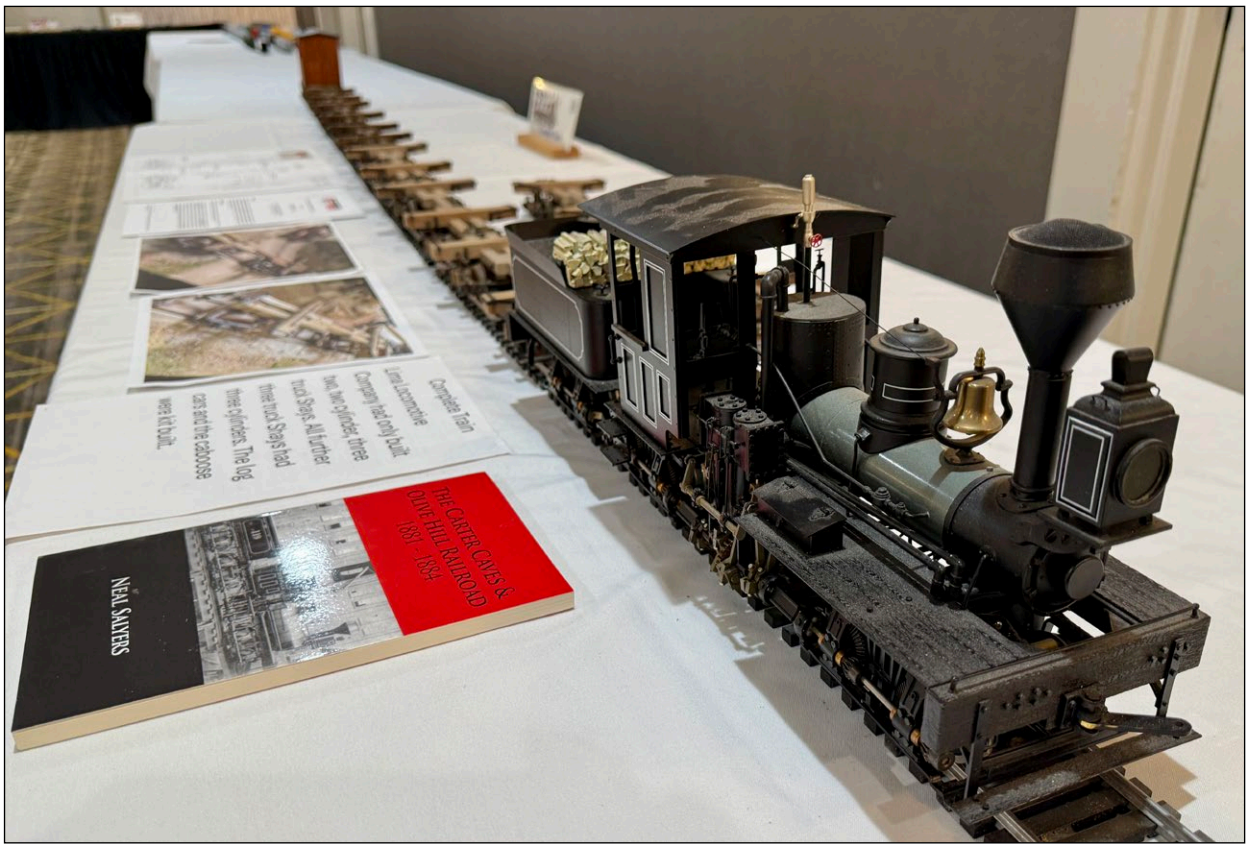
Model Photographs - Computer Enhanced
None

Photography Best in Show | David Perkins - C&O Steam Engine #1309

Most Popular Arts & Crafts Entry and Arts & Crafts Best in Show | Deborah Gifford - View from the Smokey Mary

Architecture Award | Bob Barnett - Jones Family Cotton Farm

Best Kit-Built Model Award | Russell Gifford - Bascule Bridge



Most Popular Complete Train Award | Don Formanek - Shay #119 in F Scale Logging

General Store and Supply
"If We Ain't Got It, You Don't Need It"
Farm Supplies – Feed – Seed – Implements
Hardware – Fresh Eggs
Sinclair Gas & Oil – Tractor and Auto Repair
Since 1905
PURINA CHOWS
JOHN DEERE

Gil Freitag Award for Best Scratch-Built Score, Most Popular Model Award, and Best in Show Award | Russell Gifford - Circle J Country Store

Beyond the Rails

Non-Rail Memories from the Blues Express 2025

by Divina Gato-Hogno, LSR Non-Rail Chair

The NMRA Lone Star Region's "Blues Express 2025" convention, held June 26-29 at the Holiday Inn Baton Rouge South, offered attendees a well-organized program of non-rail activities that perfectly complemented the main model railroading events.

The convention committee created an engaging schedule that provided spouses, families, and other attendees with creative projects, local attractions, and social opportunities throughout the weekend.

Non-Rail Contest Categories

The convention featured a dedicated non-rail contest with entries accepted until Friday afternoon, June 27. Contest categories included:

- **General** - Open category for various crafts and projects
- **Needlework** - Showcasing traditional and contemporary textile arts
- **Railroadiana** - Railway-related crafts that celebrated the railroad theme
- **Theme - Blues Express 2025** - Special category honoring the convention's distinctive identity

There were numerous entries to these contests that provided non-rail attendees with opportunities to showcase their creative talents while maintaining connections to the railroad hobby and convention theme.

Thursday, June 26: Welcome and Crafting

The non-rail program launched Thursday evening with a welcome social beginning at 7:00 PM, bringing together attendees in a designated room for introductions and program orientation. This opening event established the friendly, inclusive atmosphere that characterized the entire non-rail program.

The evening featured the first of several craft sessions, with participants creating pine cone Christmas ornaments. This project combined seasonal crafting with convention memorabilia, allowing attendees to take home personalized keepsakes from their Baton Rouge experience.

Additionally, participants began working on Mod Podge/design tape jewelry boxes, a multi-session project that would continue throughout the convention. This ongoing craft provided continuity across the weekend while allowing for personalization and creativity.

Friday, June 27: Exploring Baton Rouge

Friday morning offered attendees a choice between local sightseeing and continued crafting. At 9:00 AM, an organized group departed for self-drive/carpool excursions to key Baton Rouge attractions, with the Louisiana State Capitol and the Old State Capitol serving as primary destinations. These free attractions provided insight into Louisiana's political history and architectural heritage.

The historic Old State Capitol, with its distinctive Gothic Revival architecture, offered a striking contrast to the modern Louisiana State Capitol building. The tour provided attendees with panoramic views of the Mississippi River and downtown Baton Rouge, creating

memorable photo opportunities and cultural experiences.

For those preferring to remain at the hotel, the non-rail room remained open for continued work on the jewelry box project, ensuring that all participants could engage with activities suited to their interests and energy levels.

Friday Evening: Games and Education

The Friday evening program featured diverse activities designed to entertain and inform. At 5:00 PM, a Bingo session offered exciting prizes while fostering social interaction among attendees. The game provided a relaxed atmosphere for conversation and friendly competition. The Bingo game attracted both Non-rail and Rail attendees. Winners took home gift cards from Lowe's, Domino's Pizza, and Burger King.

The evening's educational component came at 8:00 PM with an open forum titled "Your Medical Questions Answered." This session addressed health and wellness topics relevant to the attendee demographic, providing valuable information in an informal setting.

Throughout Friday evening, the jewelry box crafting project continued for those wishing to advance their work during social hours.

Saturday, June 28: Jewelry Making

Saturday morning featured a dedicated bracelet and necklace making session from 9:00 AM to 12:00 noon. This focused crafting time allowed participants to create wearable accessories while socializing with fellow attendees. The session's structured timeline ensured completion before other convention activities began.

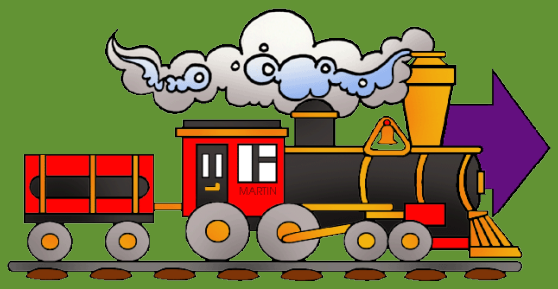
The jewelry box project remained available for those wanting to add finishing touches to their weekend's work, providing flexibility for different crafting paces and preferences.

The Blues Express 2025 non-rail program exemplified thoughtful convention planning that recognized the diverse interests and needs of attendees beyond model railroading. By combining creative projects, local attractions, social activities, and educational opportunities, the organizers created a comprehensive program that enriched the overall convention experience.

The success of activities like the pine cone Christmas ornaments and jewelry box crafting demonstrated how convention-specific projects could serve as lasting mementos while providing immediate entertainment value. The integration of Baton Rouge attractions with hotel-based activities showed respect for both adventurous attendees and those preferring quieter pursuits.

This well-balanced approach to the non-rail program shows how creative planning can ensure that all attendees find meaningful and enjoyable ways to participate in the convention community, regardless of their primary interests or physical capabilities.

"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."
-St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta **ML**



Wanted!
Nominees for the LSR Youth Award

Who: Any boy or girl 18 years old or younger with an interest in model railroading

Where: One nominee from each LSR Division

A past awardee: May be renominated for another year if they meet the qualifications specified in the LSR Constitution. **Contact Don Winn** donswinn@gmail.com

How: Fill out the special Youth Award Membership Form available on http://www.lonestarregion.com/

When: Submit your nomination to your LSR Division Director **today**!

For more information contact:
Don Winn, Youth Chairman: donswinn@gmail.com

Join the new Lone Star Region
Member Directory

The LSR has a new member directory! **Joining is completely optional,**
and only the information you choose to provide will be included.
For privacy, the directory is only accessible to those who participate.

We encourage all members to join, especially if you're interested in visiting other model railroaders while traveling in the region -- this directory will be a great resource!

To join or if you have questions, contact Chuck Lind at chucklind46@gmail.com.
Once he adds you to the system, you'll be able to access the directory using the **Instant Church Directory** app on your smartphone or tablet.

To get started: Install the Instant Church Directory app. Create a login using the same email address you gave Chuck. (**The emails must match, or you won't be able to log in.**) Choose a password with at least 8 characters, including 2 capital letters, numbers, or symbols. Check your email (including your spam folder) for a confirmation message and click the link to verify your account.

Once verified, you can browse the directory, update your own information and photo, and choose how much (or how little) you want to share.

We hope you'll join and help us build a valuable resource for all LSR members!

A Second Life for Freight Cars

by Thomas Stephens | Photos by Pat Coughlin

When a freight card is too old or beat up, they sometimes transfer to Maintenance of Way (MOW) service.

On the Missouri Pacific family of railroads, these were designated by adding 'X' to the start of the car number.

Presented here are several views of one such MOW car, TP (Texas & Pacific) X4446.

First a view of the car in a train, possibly a work train, then views from several angles including two closer looks.

Looking at the service stencils, this car was built in July 1950, while the last photo was taken in October 1991. These cars stayed around for a long time...waste not, want not! **ML**

X-4446
Ft. Worth
7-14-1991
T.P.
X4446 MW

X-4446
Ft. Worth
7-14-1991
LT. WT. 49000 MS. 7-50

X-4446
Ft. Worth
10-12-1991
T.P.
X4446 MW

Controlling Track Power From Two Places

by Thomas Stephens | Photos by Pat Coughlin

On my home layout the TB&W, I have a staging area hidden behind a backdrop/partition where I deliver empty coal hoppers to an offline coal mine. Trains are often made up with motive power and coal loads are added to hoppers prior to an operating session.

As part of this arrangement, I installed a SPST electrical toggle switch and panel LED indicator to be able to kill the power on this single dead-end track. I found this to be very beneficial in being able to turn off the power to sound and non-sound engines at the start or end of this run.

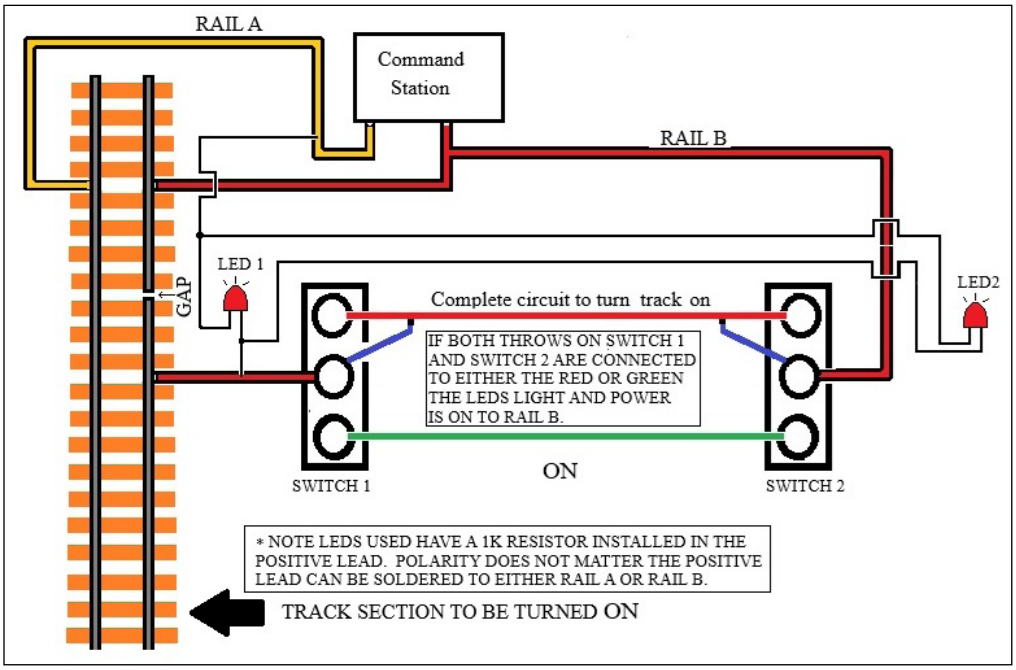
However, over time this has proved to be inadequate, as my son recently pointed out, because there was no way to turn off the power to this track from the main part of the layout without walking around a section of the layout and ducking under a pullout section to access this remote area and control switch.

I thought about how to address this problem. I could simply add a second SPST (single pole single throw) switch near the Engine service area and I would be able to turn the track on from either location, but the track would not be off unless both switches were in the off position.

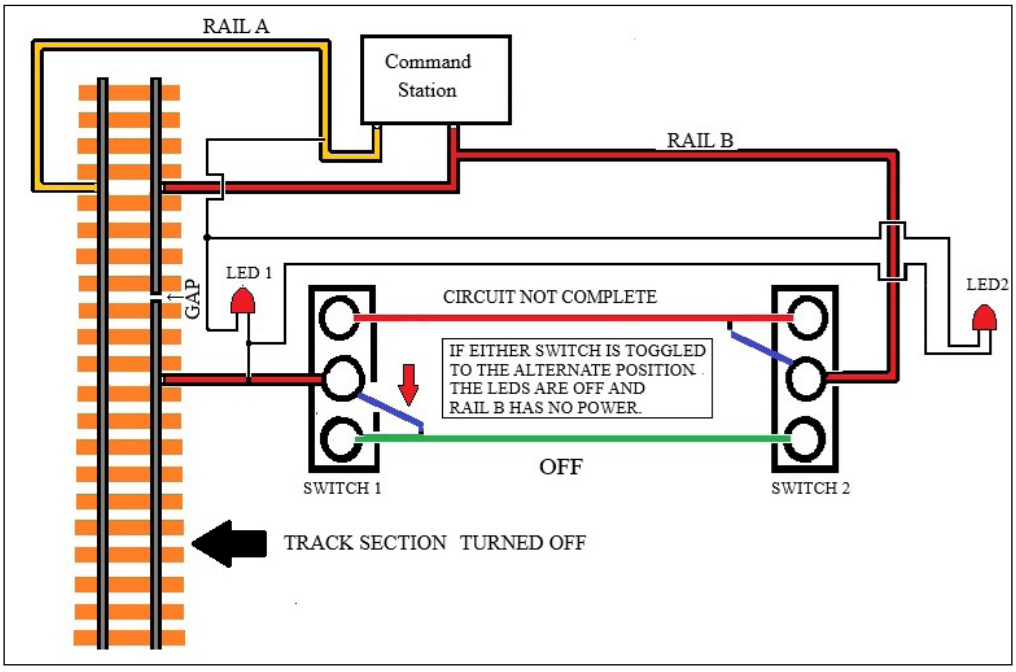
After giving it some additional thought, I came up with a solution which uses two SPDT (single pole double throw) electrical switches.

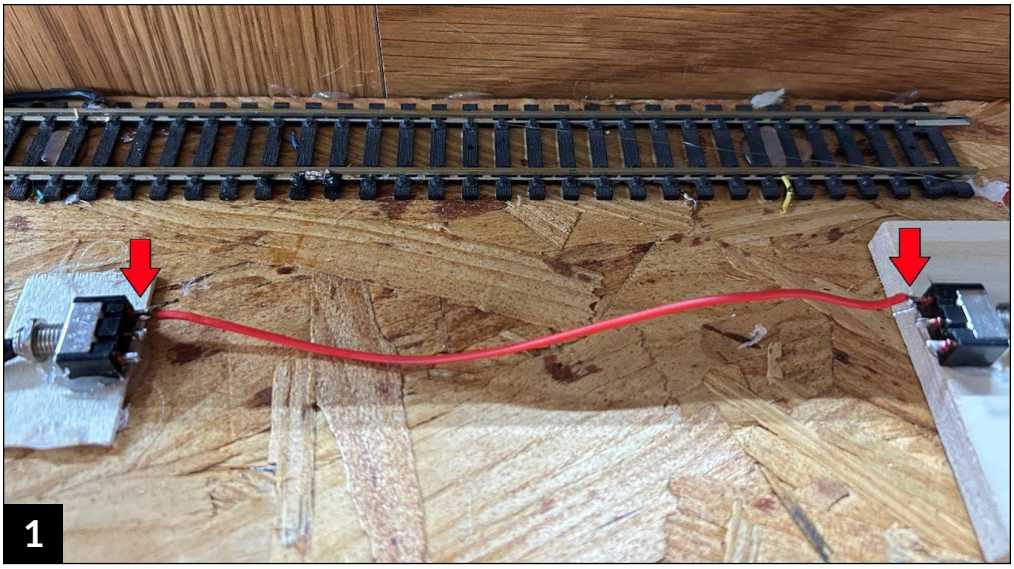
Maybe this could be helpful on your railroad, too!

NOTE: The rail of the track you want to kill power on ("Rail B") must be gapped. To make the circuit wiring more presentable I have recreated it on my work bench by using the following steps.

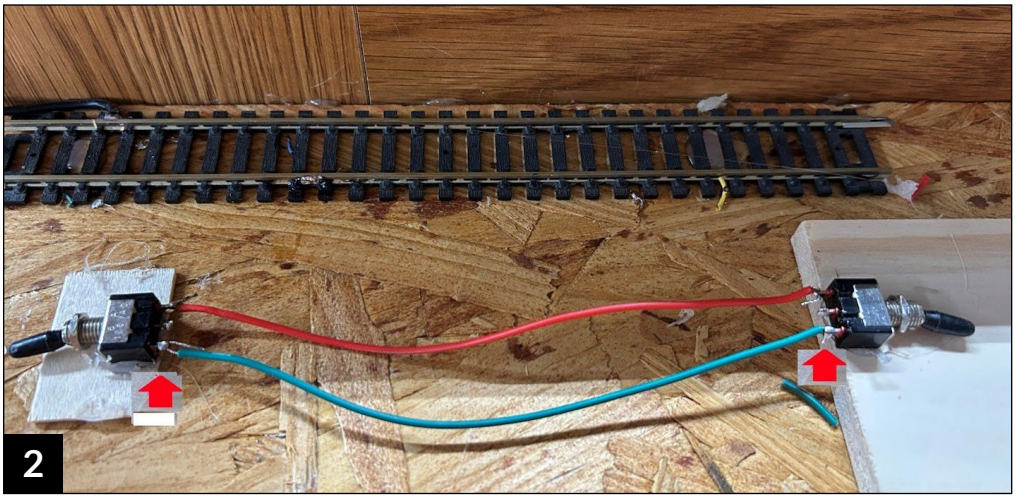

RAIL A
Command Station
RAIL B
LED 1
GAP
LED2
Complete circuit to turn track on
IF BOTH THROWS ON SWITCH 1 AND SWITCH 2 ARE CONNECTED TO EITHER THE RED OR GREEN THE LEDS LIGHT AND POWER IS ON TO RAIL B.
SWITCH 1
ON
SWITCH 2
* NOTE LEDS USED HAVE A 1K RESISTOR INSTALLED IN THE POSITIVE LEAD. POLARITY DOES NOT MATTER THE POSITIVE LEAD CAN BE SOLDERED TO EITHER RAIL A OR RAIL B.
TRACK SECTION TO BE TURNED ON

Here's an overview of the circuit we're building. Both switches have to be in the same position for the power to flow, as shown above. If they aren't in agreement, then the circuit will be broken, as shown below.

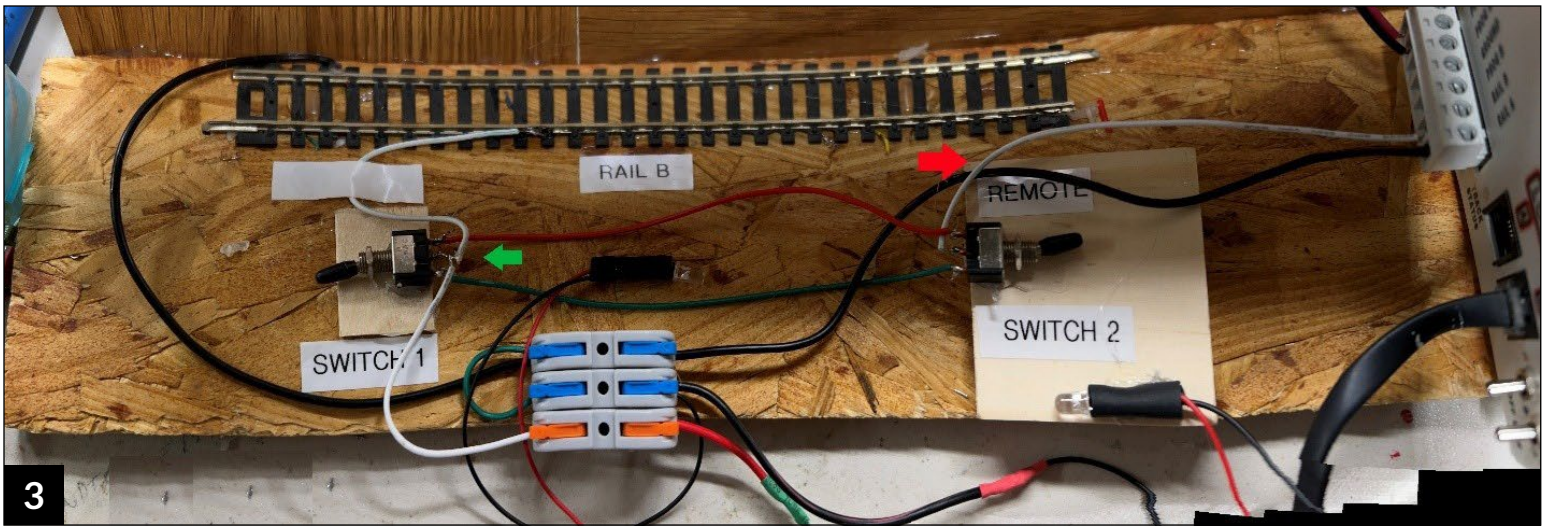




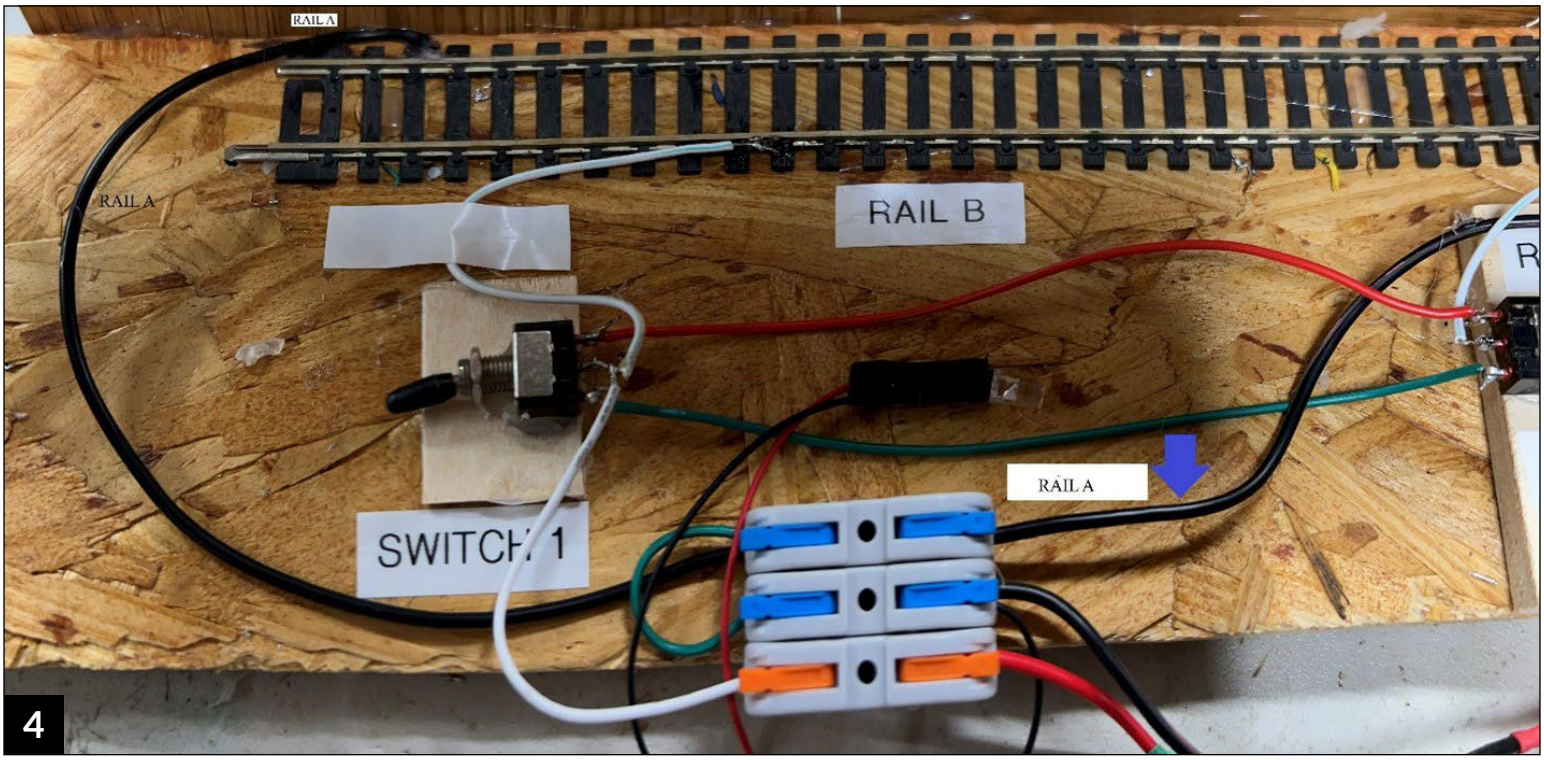
Solder a (**red**) wire to one of the outer poles on SPDT **Switch 1** and solder the other end of the wire to an outer pole on **Switch 2**.



Solder a second (**green**) wire to the other outer pole on **Switch 1** and solder the other end of the wire to the remaining outer pole on **Switch 2**.



Solder a (**white**) wire to track **Rail B** then solder the other end of the wire to the center pin of the SPDT **Switch 2**. Then solder a second (**white**) wire to the center pin of SPDT **Switch 2** and connect the other end to **Rail B** of the command station or power source. Finally, connect a (**black**) wire from track **Rail A** to **Rail A** of the command station or power source.



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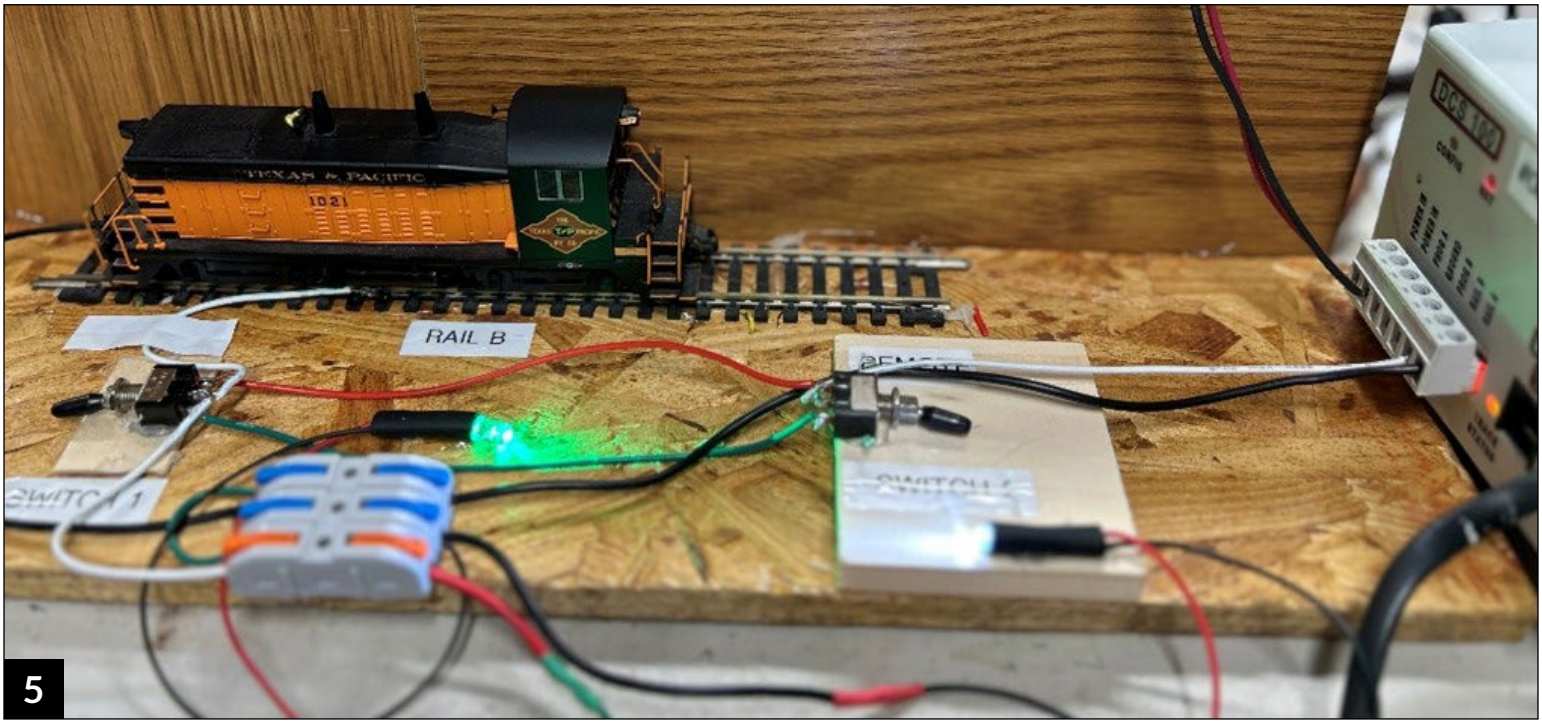
Connect one side of the LEDs (light emitting diodes) to the **Rail A** (**black**) wire and the other to the **Rail B** (**white**) wire. These LEDs are connected in parallel and should only light when Switch 1 and Switch 2 are both in position to supply track power. NOTE: If you are running on DC power instead of DCC I would recommend using a 12-volt incandescent bulb or a lower voltage bulb with a resistor inline instead of an LED.



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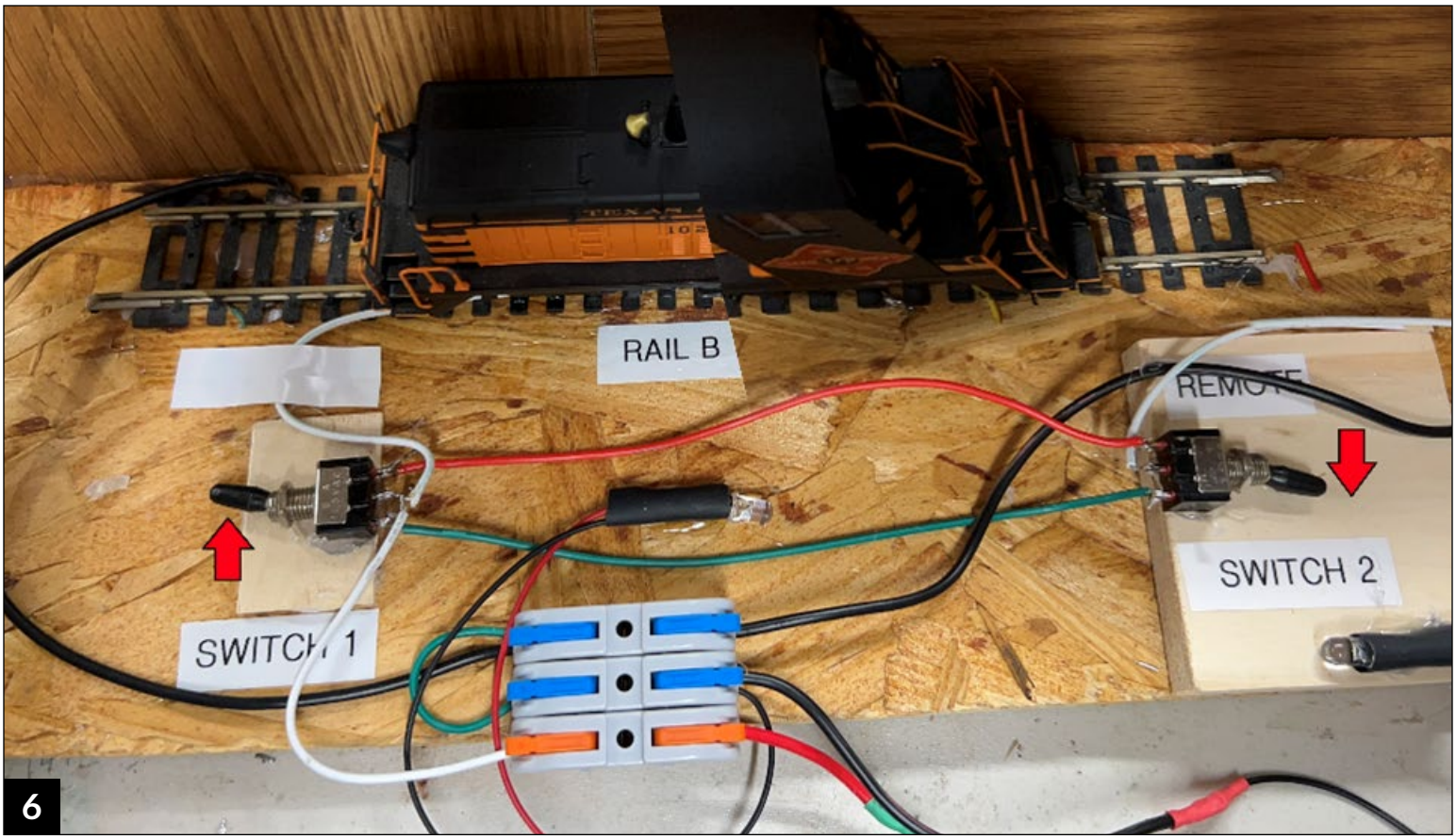
OPERATION: If both toggles are thrown to the position where both center pins from Switch 1 and Switch 2 are in the down position connected to the top red wire as shown below the LEDs will light, and the gapped kill track will be powered. If both toggles are thrown to the position where both center pins from Switch 1 and Switch 2 are thrown to the up position (connected to the bottom green wire) a path from center pin to center pin will again be established the LEDs will light, and the gapped track will be powered.



If the toggles are in position where only one connection is made to each one of the red and green wires (as shown) the LEDs will not light, and the kill track will be unpowered. As a result of the wiring circuit above the track and light emitting diodes can be turned on or off from either the remote location near the main yard or the location next to the offline coaling track.

Note I normally use panel type 5mm LEDs and locate them just above the mini toggle switches on my fascia.

You can order 8 pcs 6A/125V SPDT miniature switches from Amazon for about eight dollars. The Mxuteuk Part no. MTS-102 is one example. You can also use only three of the six connections on a DPDT switch if you want. Do NOT use a center-off three position toggle switch.

I used the 12 volt 5mm pre-wired light emitting diodes from Amazon which have a 1k resistor on the red positive wire. The ones I purchased came in five colors with several of each color for about twelve dollars. For ease in connecting the LED circuit I used three KV211 lever connectors which are also available from Amazon.

I hope this little project of mine helps you out! It's certainly helped me. **ML**

Weights for Wooden Freight Cars

by Steve Sandifer, MMR

My friend Bob Barnett, MMR, has an operating railroad with a wonderful collection of old passenger and freight cars from days gone by. Many are wood kits or paper side kits, some built by well-known modelers who are no longer with us. This makes them significant cars. Some of these cars are not suited for operations because of their weight. **(1)** A wood car often weighs 1.5 ounces. The NMRA suggested weight for a 40' HO car is 3.75 ounces.

Also, many of these cars have metal frame sprung trucks which are known for creating shorts in electrical circuits which are more noticeable with DCC. The truck solution is simple. Accurail sells Andrews and Bettendorf trucks in 12, 50, or 100 pair packs. In quantities of 50 pairs, the frames are $1.20 a pair. I put Intermountain wheels in my cars, also available in 100 axle bulk packs for about $80. This works out to $5 per car for very free rolling trucks with no shorting issues.

Weight is another issue. Years ago, I purchased a 25-pound bag of #5 lead shot from a local gun store. #5 shot is .120" in diameter. You can get smaller shot – the higher the number, the smaller the shot, just like wire numbers. For my #5, I drilled a 1/8" hole in the floor of the wooden box car just in front of the bolster. **(2)** I chose the location because it does not disturb the appearance of the underbody of the car. Drill the hole as close to the bolster as possible (you'll see why in the next step).

You are going to spill lead shot, so do the next work over an old cake pan or something else that will contain what you spill. Pour the lead shot into the car through the hole you drilled until it gets to the desired weight.

1

2

It may be helpful to put a strip of masking tape around the end of the car to form a dam to contain the allusive shot. Poured sounds easy, but the shot is not always uniform in size, so some of them will need persuading to enter the car. **(3)**

At Hobby Lobby I purchased a package of 2 small squeeze bottles with oversize needle applicators. I filled one with white glue (or carpenter's glue). I then put about ½" of the contents of the bottle into the car. **(4)** I did not want the glue to go to the inside of the roof as would happen if I turned the car over, so I held the car where the glue would drip onto the inside of the floor.

Keeping the car level, shake the contents of the car vigorously. The goal is to get the lead shot to roll in the glue coating the shot surface. After shaking if a lot of the shot is still sounding loose, put in a little more glue. The next challenge is to get the gummy mixture to settle evenly inside the car. This required more careful shaking. Pick up the car by the roof holding it above the doors.

3

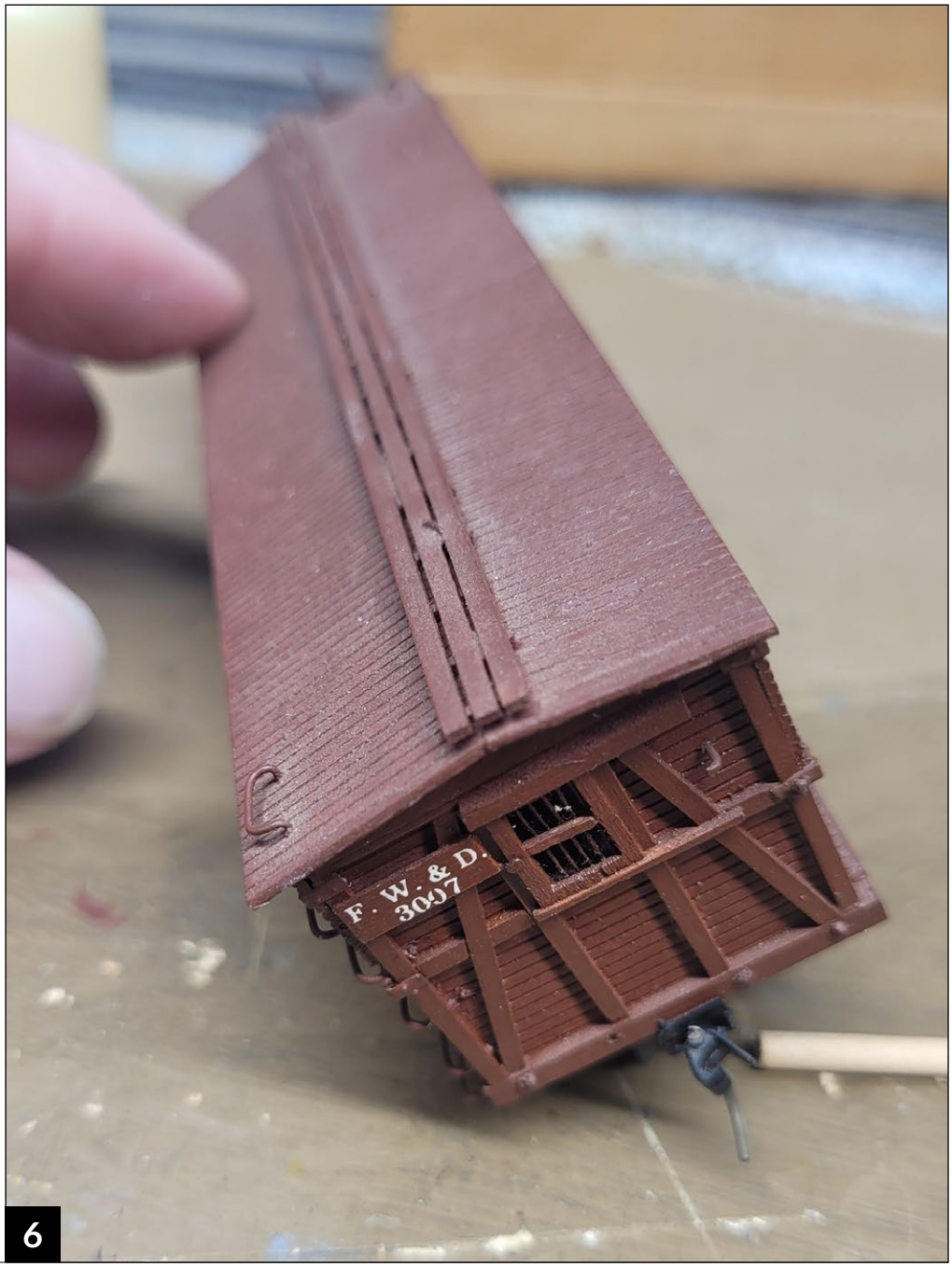
4

This will tell you if one end of the car weighs more than the other. **(5)** If uneven – shake it more. Once the distribution seems even end to end, check side to side. Place the car on a flat surface and tilt it from one side to side. See if it tends to lean one way or wants to fall over. **(6)** If so, shake side to side. Once the weight seems stable and even, place the car aside to dry. It is not necessary to plug the hole in the floor. Do look out for escaping glue through that hole.

One of Bob's cars was a beautiful stock car. I did the same basic procedure to it of drilling and weighing, however, I did postpone gluing, so I used a piece of .125" dowel to plug the hole. I did not want any of the glue to come through the slats on the side of the car, so a different method was used to apply the glue. The shot seemed to cover the interior floor when level. I was able to insert the needle applicator through the slats of the car to apply glue over the shot inside the car. This was done patiently and carefully. No glue came through the slats, and the weight was not visible except below the lowest slat.

Bob can now operate these beautiful cars on his railroad. **ML**

5



6

LSR CONVENTION

2026 CONNECTIONS

AUSTIN, TEXAS

The LSR convention is returning to the Austin area!

June 18 -21, 2026

at the

Wyndham Garden Austin
3401 South Interstate 35
Austin, TX 78741

Dozens of Clinics • Operating Sessions • Layout Tour
Prototype Tours • Special Guest Clinicians and Speaker
Huge Contest Room • Silent Auction
Great Location at the Center of it All!

Connections2026.com

Registration opens soon!

Benchwork: The Foundation to Your Layout's Success

by Cliff Scherer

Continuing our series on building a room-size layout, we are turning to benchwork. In the last issue we talked about train room prep and in the March 2025 issue we designed the track plan using AnyRail. The foundation of the layout is next: benchwork is the structure that will support the rest of our efforts on this layout.

Benchwork is a topic that has been covered exhaustively in books, the Internet, and other forums so we won't rehash it here. If you are new to the types and styles of benchwork, you will do well to search for one of several books that explain the subject more completely than we have room for here.

Instead, let's look at benchwork using real examples in the ongoing construction of the Fredericksburg & Northern RR.

1

Heavy construction is used on Mike Barrett's layout where a peninsula extends 14' out from the wall and then turns back another 8' toward a corner of the room. At two points the peninsula is only about 2' wide. This dictates robust benchwork to keep the peninsula rigid.

2

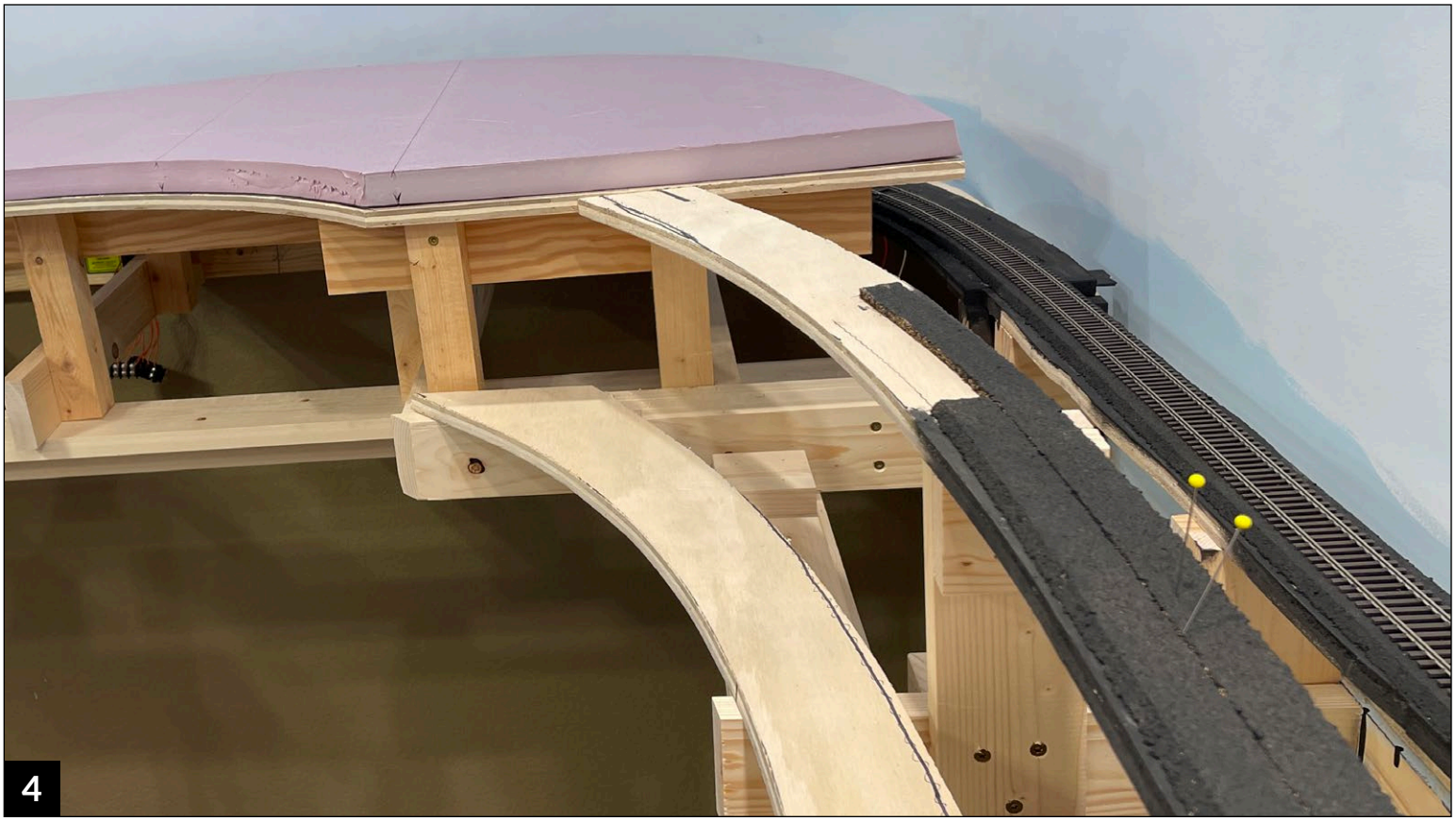
Bob Fricke's layout uses unique peninsula support. This custom-built bookshelf supports a very heavy peninsula. This robust form of benchwork makes the layout rock solid and is needed to support the mountain on top that goes to the ceiling.

Light benchwork on the F&N layout is possible where there is very little weight on top and a solid attachment to the wall.

Ultimately, whether you build heavy or light is your preference, but let's explore the lighter build on the F&N.

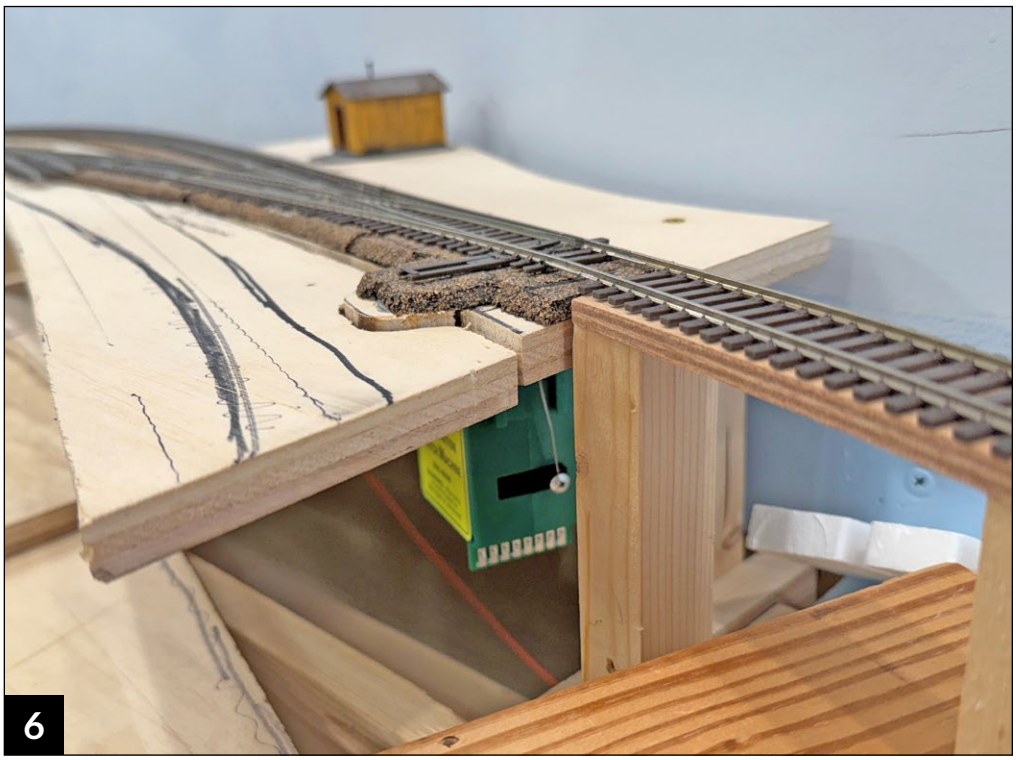
Planning Ahead

Before starting to cut boards, we'll need to do a little planning. Much of this can be done with AnyRail track planning software, but let's look at a few specifics.



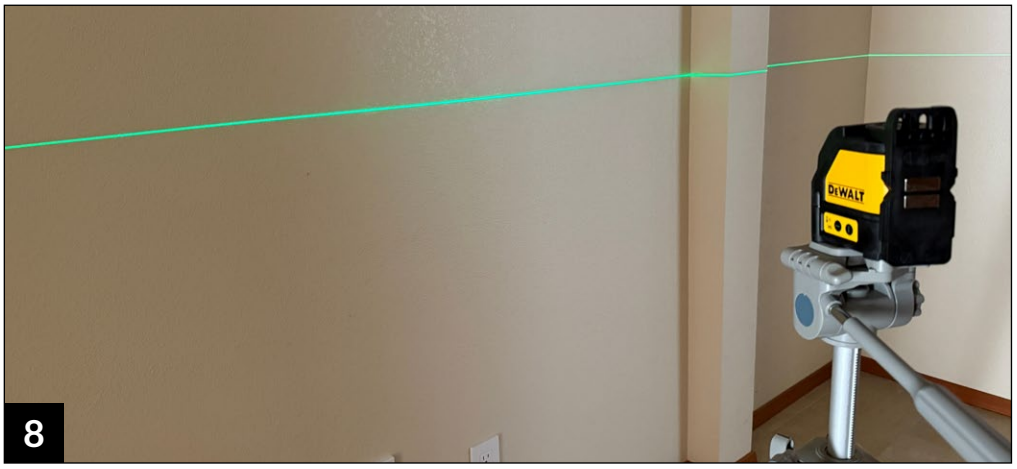
If your layout has grades and tracks at multiple heights, you will need to plan for transitions between levels. In the photo above, the plywood sub-roadbed coming from the lower right intersects the higher level that has a pink foam sheet on top of plywood as a sub roadbed. When track is installed, the pink foam will be cut to allow the track grade to continue. All of this required planning in advance of setting benchwork heights. When complete this will allow the track to run through a shallow cut as it ascends through the pink foam. The harsh transition between flat surface and open construction will be hidden by adding scenic elements.

Rivers and other below-grade scenery features add significantly to layout interest, but you'll need to make allowances in the benchwork if these are going to be deeper than the sub-roadbed. Here, an opening is provided for the future South Grape Creek.



Providing a clear area to mount switch machines is a good reason to plan ahead. In this photo, the green Tortoise Switch Machine has very little room between the temporary bridge riser and the lower plywood level on the left. Without good planning, it's very easy to locate joists in line with a turnout's throw bar on the track above.

7



8

To get the ledger level, it's easiest to use a laser level on a tripod as seen here. This takes the line around obstacles like the column in this photo. It also spans longer distances than a 4' level. It's not perfect, though, so you should check yourself as you go with a spirit level.

Installing the Ledger Board

The ledger board was actually installed previously along with the backdrop to give the backdrop support. Let's do a quick review of what it is and how it's installed.

The ledger board is mounted on level around the entire room where benchwork will be built. Its job is to support joists that are attached to the wall and to provide a level point of reference all the way around the layout. It also supports the bottom edge of the backdrop.

Foundations and ceilings in our homes are far from level over even small distances. The ledger board keeps us from needing to measure up from the floor as we work around the layout. It provides a level reference point and makes work more efficient because we use it to set track heights as they change around the layout.

9

Here the ledger has been installed, remaining on level on both sides of the column. Ledgers can be 2"x4"x8' lumber that is straight with no large knots going through the wood.

Basic Benchwork

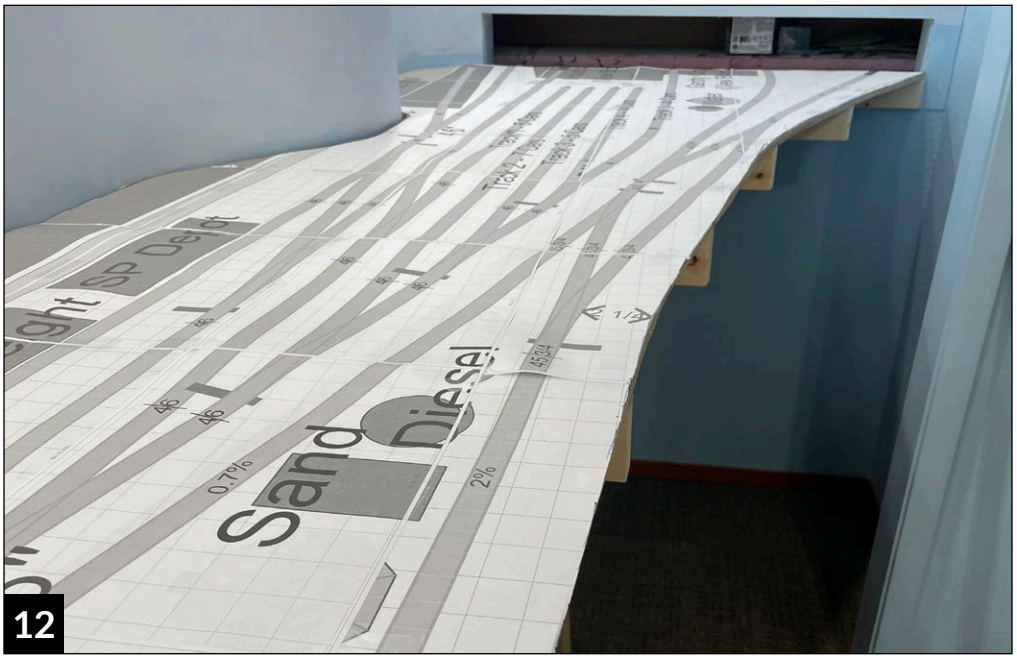
The most basic benchwork on the F&N is in areas where the layout is flat and can be attached to the wall **(11)**. The framing here is light, utilizing 1x3 joists and 1x3's for the L-girder. The leg is a 2x2 and the heaviest piece is the ledger which is a 2x3.

Legs are used here even though this area is narrow enough to use shelf brackets. This is because the other side of the wall is built into the hillside and there are freon lines running through the wall. Therefore, the wall is built with removable panels to access the freon lines. Shelf brackets would have interfered with this. It's good planning to design for, and around obstacles.

10

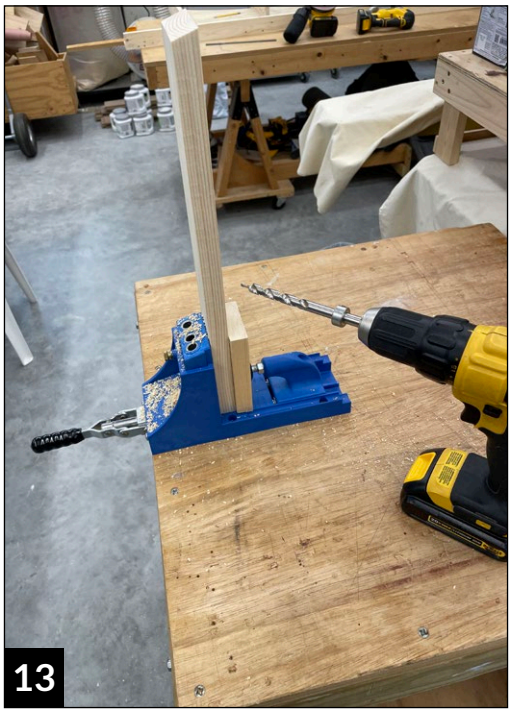
To install the ledger, first mark the location of the wall studs. Then align the top edge of the ledger with the laser line on the wall. If you are working alone, it's easiest to use a brad nailer as shown in the photo in order to temporarily tack the ledger to the wall. Just put brads through near the ends of the ledger at stud locations. Set the brad nailer for maximum depth and use 2" brads. This only gets the brads through the ledger and the sheet rock, so it is only temporary. It will give enough support so that you can drill pilot holes and install 3" screws at the studs. Don't skip the pilot holes. Allowing 3" screws to make their own hole will pull the ledger out of level even if they are "self-tapping" screws.

11



12

Here is the same area of benchwork as in the last photo but seen from above. The ends of the joists are visible on the right edge of the layout surface. These will provide attachment points for the fascia.


13

Pocket holes are used extensively in this benchwork. They essentially provide for screwing two pieces together, setting the screws in from an angle. They work nicely when joining inside corners. The pocket screw joint is relatively strong, quick to install, and more rigid than other options such as metal angle brackets. These photos show a Kreg Pocket Hole Jig which makes quick work of drilling the pockets. In the left photo, a 1x3 is in the jig ready to have the pockets drilled. In the right photo, the same 1x3 has two pockets drilled at the far end. It may be hard to see, but the specialized drill bit has a shoulder near the point which steps it down to drilling only a pilot hole at the bottom of the pocket. Special screws are used in pocket holes, and you should stick to these in order to maintain the strength of the joint.

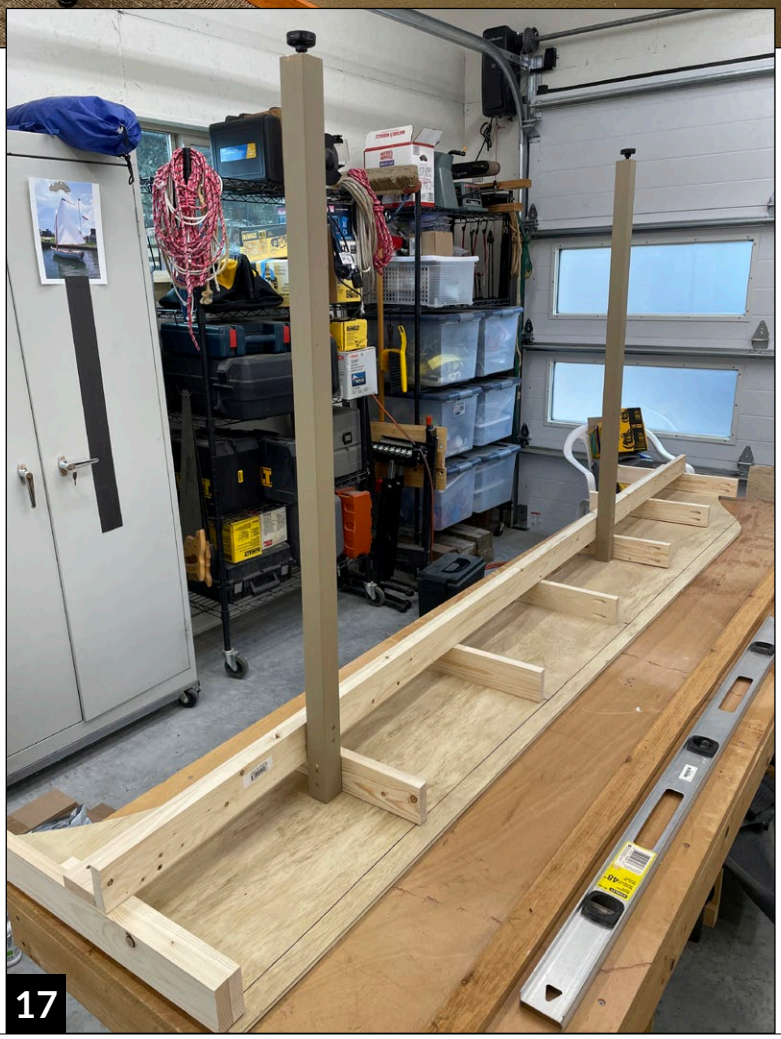
14

15

This photo shows a pocket hole joint in the lower part of the 1x3 cleat. Only one pocket hole is needed because the strength of joist-to-ledger is at the end of the joist resting on the top of the ledger behind the cleat. The cleat with the pocket hole only stabilizes the location of the joist.

16

Where possible, the benchwork for the F&N is built in sections and then installed on the layout. This section has just been installed and joined to the section at the right. In this area of the layout the joists are screwed to the face of the ledger in order to allow for the future hidden staging track which comes down close to the top of the ledger in height.



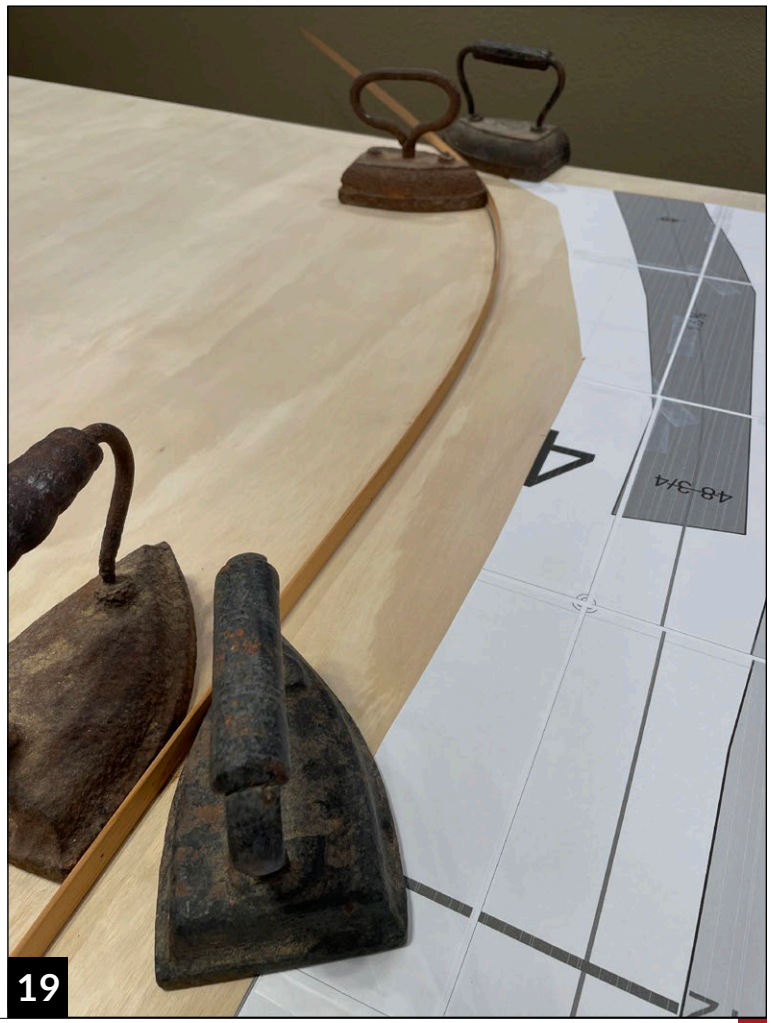
17

Here is how the section in the last photo was built. The plywood, cut to outside dimensions only at this point, is laid upside down. The joists are measured based on their individual position on the plywood and cut to fit. A 1x3 L-girder is cut to length. Legs are cut to length and positioned. Everything is glued, screwed, and clamped together, except the plywood layout surface. The plywood will be cut using the cookie cutter method and then only its track areas will be installed. Note that legs are always positioned where they can be attached from two perpendicular directions – in this case screwed to the vertical side of the L-girder and to the side of the joist. This section shows the advantage of lighter weight construction. The section is very strong, very rigid and weighs less than 20 pounds. This makes it easy for single-handed work.

18

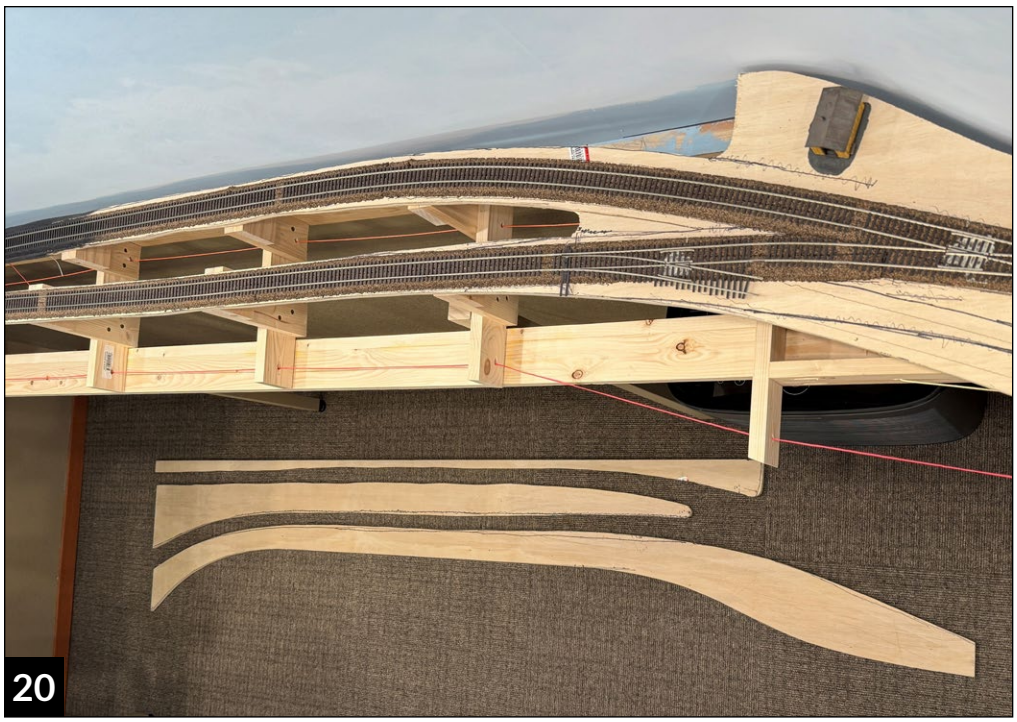
Free flowing curves along the layout edge are an enhancement worth the effort. In addition, if plywood is cut for sub roadbed in either cookie cutter or open grid benchwork areas, then smooth curves will need to be drawn. In the photo, the layout edge is being cut.

On a layout, cookie cutting is a technique that involves cutting the plywood surface to allow track to rise or fall creating grades, while leaving some areas level. This is the plywood top that goes on the benchwork in the previous photo. It will have two tracks with one ascending and the other descending. A jigsaw is used to cut the plywood, based on markings created from the full-size printed plans and smoothed using a batten as described next.



19

The fair curve drawn on the plywood in the previous photo is easy to do. The technique is borrowed from one of my other hobbies: wooden boat building. A batten is used to lay out the curve and spiling weights keep the batten where you want it. I bought the “weights” years ago when antique shops sold these irons for $2 each. This batten is a 1/16”x1/2”x8’ strip of Sitka Spruce cut from sailboat spar material, but you can use any long thin strip of wood. The big box lumber stores sell a ¼”x3/4”x8’ manufactured wood screen molding that works well for broad curves.


20

Here, the plywood sheet from the previous photo has had the “cookies” cut out and the non-track pieces are laid out on the floor. The remaining piece is installed with the solid, level end at the bottom of the photo and the two ribbons of plywood supporting the tracks going to the top of the photo.

21

Peninsulas

In around-the-room layouts, much of the bench work can be attached to the walls, creating more rigidity. But there are usually areas where the benchwork needs to jut into the room on peninsulas. These create the need for somewhat stronger and heavier framing.

On the F&N there are two peninsulas extending out into the room. The framing on these uses 1x4 L-girders and extra framing to tie them into the benchwork sections along the wall.

22

The center peninsula extends furthest and gets more serious treatment to tie it into the benchwork along the wall. This peninsula extends into the room 8' beyond the front edge of the benchwork on the wall. This photo shows the multiple parts that extend from the peninsula L-girder back to the wall. Everything is locked together by screwing each framing member to two other frame members running perpendicular to each other. The overlap in the foreground is a long lap joint that stiffens the tie-in. Finally, the plywood layout surface is flat and broad on the peninsula. When the plywood is screwed to the joists, it stiffens everything considerably.

23

This is the same peninsula as in the previous photo but showing the legs here. Notice that the legs have a plywood sheet connecting them in pairs. This effectively creates a girder so that they resist side to side flexing. There is no flexing back and forth toward the wall at left because of the robust tie-in to the wall-mounted benchwork. You will also notice a third leg on the far side of the closer pair of legs. This leg will also be joined to its mate with a plywood sheet. Creating a girder between the legs instead of a truss (diagonal 1x4 between legs) is much more rigid and also lowers the relatively high center of gravity of the peninsula by adding weight down lower.

Risers and Grades in Benchwork

The F&N has three main levels for the track separated by an inch or more each. The benchwork is essentially flat in the broad area of each level, but there are transition areas between the flat areas. These transition areas need appropriate grades to get the track from one level to the next.

24

Longer transitions are achieved using risers to place the plywood sub-roadbed at the correct grade. Our track plan, designed in AnyRail tells us what height the sub-roadbed should be at the point of each joist along the length of a grade. This height is measured from the top of the ledger, making it very easy to install risers at the correct height without worrying about getting the grade too steep or not steep enough to meet the next level. This photo also shows the smooth transition from flat, to vertical curve, to constant grade, and back to flat again. This is the time to make sure vertical curves are not too abrupt in transition from flat to inclined grade.

25

Risers are simply and quickly built. A horizontal 1x3 is attached to a vertical 1x3 by applying wood glue and using four 1" brads set with the brad nailer. The brads eliminate the need to clamp the joint and the riser can be installed on the layout almost immediately if you don't put excessive stress on the top. When screwing sub roadbed to risers, always screw into side grain, not end grain – that's the reason for the horizontal 1x3.

This area of L-girders, beams, joists, and risers may look intimidating, but it's really not, as long as you work in an organized fashion. Be consistent with where you place screws for similar pieces and joints. Try to use standard dimensions for repeating structural pieces. Here, you can see that this area uses 2x2 risers with 1x3 beams to support the plywood above. That standard is used all along this 14' section of the layout. Standardization is efficient because you can cut all the pieces you need at one time. Where you have risers with beams supporting larger areas of plywood, arrange them in rows that leave room for you to work under the layout in the future.

Tools and Hardware Used:

Tools:

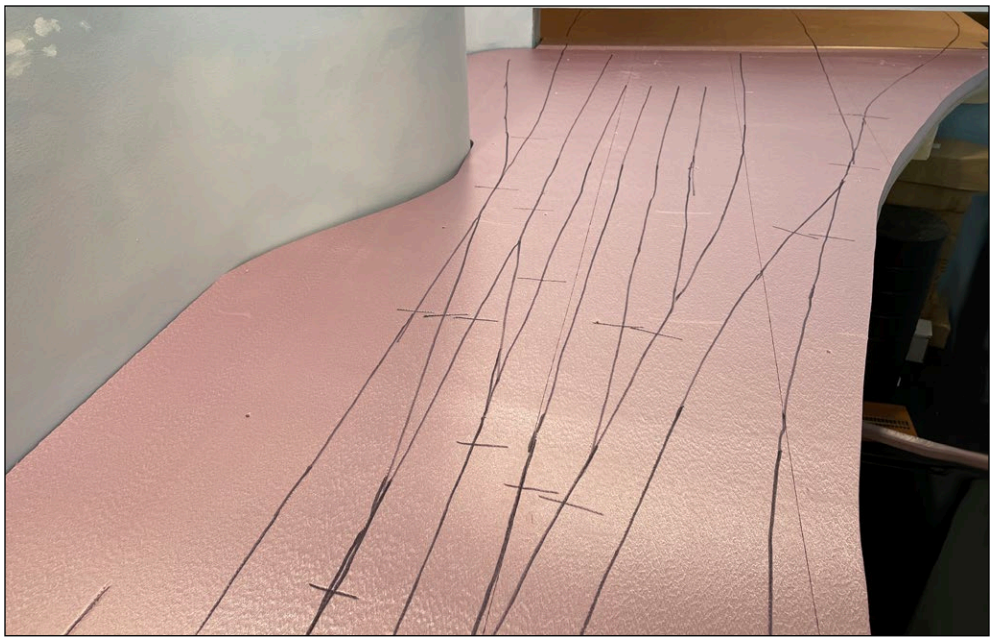
- **Stud Finder**: Zircon StudSensor HD55
- **Laser Level:** Dewalt 100ft, Green Self-Leveling Cross Laser
- **Brad Nailer:** Dewalt 20V Battery 18-Gauge Brad Nailer
- **Plywood Grip** (1-person panel carrier): Kreg Panel Carrier
- **Rotary Cutter** (for cutting the fascia line from full-size paper layout plans): Fiskars 60mm Rotary Cutter
- **Kreg Pocket Hole Jig:** Kreg K4 Pocket Hole Jig System. Order additional screws for 1x3 and 1x4 material: Kreg SML-C125-250 Zinc Pocket Screw - 1 1/4 Inch #8 Coarse Thread
- **Star Drive (Torx) Bits** (for driving non-pocket hole screws with power drill or impact driver) – Sizes needed are T-15, T-20 and T-25
- **Drill Bit/Countersink combo** – Straight and tapered countersink drill bits from various manufacturers can speed up your work
- **Drill/Countersink set** in a single bit

Hardware:

- **For benchwork except ledger board:** GRK Fasteners #8 General Purpose T-15 self-starting screws in 1 ¼" and 2". Even though these are self-starting screws, you should drill pilot holes and countersink to avoid splitting wood and for stronger joints.
- **For attaching the ledger board to wall:** GRK Fasteners #9 x 3 1/8" R4 Multi-Purpose Screws with T-25 bugle head.
- **Adjustable Feet for Legs:** From Amazon, PONGJA Heavy Duty Furniture Levelers, 8 Pack

Moving On

With the benchwork complete, we'll move on next issue to installing foam sub roadbed and laying track. **ML**



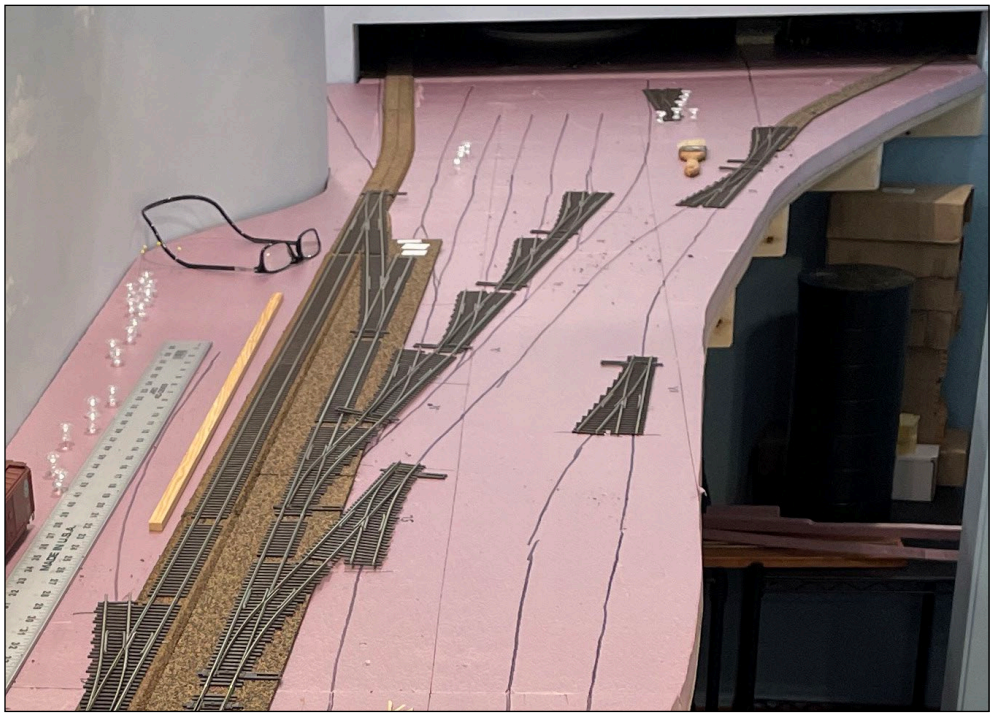
Lumber Selection

In past years it was possible to give specifications for lumber based on industry grading, but those days are largely gone. One of the big box stores has grades of Standard, Premium and Select. In this arrangement Select is the top and Premium is in the middle – apparently marketing people are grading lumber these days. None of those category names conform to industry standards.

For benchwork, choose lumber that is straight with few knots of medium to small size. Avoid lumber with large knots that go all the way through the wood. When looking for warping, sight lengthwise down the board. Also look for cupping which is a convex shape in the cross section of the board. Do not use treated lumber as it will warp as the preservative dries inside the wood.

On the F&N, 1x4, 1x3, and 2x2 lumber is used from Home Depot in both Select and Premium Grades, depending on what was in stock. The plywood is Home Depot Sande plywood, ½" thick. (Sande is a hardwood tree that grows in tropical climates. The Internet claims that Sande is grown in a sustainable way.)

In any event, Sande plywood is great for model railroad sub-roadbed. The wood does have a distinct odor that some find unpleasant, but it off-gasses in a few days.



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Historian's Corner

Modeling With a Purpose: The San Antonio Model Railroad Association

by Bob Barnett, MMR
LSR Historian

Models and layouts are designed and built for various purposes. Occasionally one will visit a layout that is so focused on time and place it puts the visitor right into the scene in the location, era and season that was intended by the model creator. For purpose of this article, we will call that "modeling with a purpose". One of the best examples of this and one that is easily accessible to other modelers and the public is the San Antonio Model Railroad Association's beautiful San Antonio Northern Railroad. What is remarkable about the SAMRA layout is how well it accomplishes several purposes:

- As an Educational Charity the layout is set up as a historical display showing the farms, ranches, towns and local industries that were characteristic of Central Texas in the mid-Twentieth Century.
- As a model railroad club, the layout is set up as an excellent operations-based railroad and operating sessions are held regularly.
- As a model railroad club SAMRA also hosts regular "Fun Run Days" where modelers bring their own equipment and can run prototype length train of their preferred era independent of the set operations-based theme.
- And to serve all these purposes the layout serves as a showcase for a host of scratch-built buildings, towns and industries that "Set the Scene" for the passing trains.

SAMRA has been blessed with an active membership that includes many fine modelers including several Master Model Railroaders who have contributed to the quality of the layout. John Lowrance, MMR presented a clinic titled "Setting the Scene" for several years. I prevailed on John to dust it off and present it one more time for our 2024 LSR Convention because I believe the attention to detail he discusses in his presentation is key to creating the "thoroughly believable" scenes shown below. Many of the prototype structures on the SAMRA were built by the late Doyle Bond, MMR. Doyle was a fixture in the Lone Star Region Contest Room for years specializing in railroad stations and prototypical industries. MMR's Al Boos and Tom Crosthwait have also contributed to the structures, scenery and prototype feel of the layout. There are undoubtedly other modelers who have contributed to this work of art that I have failed to mention here. I encourage SAMRA members to contact me with further details on the structures and scenes on the layout. Several other model railroads around the Lone Star Region have been faithful to creating a specified time and place, and we will visit them in coming months. But for now, enjoy a visit the SA&N and the prototypically faithful scenes featured there. **ML**

The Southern Pacific Station in San Antonio as modeled by the late Doyle Bond, MMR.

An arch-typical Texas Industry-the Cotton Gin. These structures dotted Texas from East Texas to the Hill Country.

Perhaps San Antonio's most famous industry: The Pearl Brewery

For those that remember 1960-1970's modest-priced beers, the other most famous San Antonio Industry would be The Lone Star Brewery

The Missouri Pacific station in New Braunfels was accurately modeled. The station is now a museum.

A rock bottom stream, low water bridge, and Cypress trees along the banks are icons of the Texas Hill Country. John Lowrance individually modeled the cypress trees complete with the “Cypress Knees”. To those familiar with the Hill Country rivers and creeks this scene really sets the tone for the Layout.

Dittlinger Mill in Dittlinger, Texas. The authors 6-foot long MoPac System Map shows Dittlinger as a separate station from New Braunfels. The mill was served by the MoPac and considered a separate station point. The City of New Braunfels basically grew out to the Dittlinger area. This Mill was also modeled on Gil Freitag's Stony Creek & Western.

This unique feed mill includes an outside braced wood crib type elevator. The author we told the All Boos, MMR modeled the mill.

Hollywood comes to Texas. This house was used in the 2003 movie "Second Hand Lions" staring Robert Duval and Michael Caine. The Movie was shot on location in Coupland, Texas near Austin. Doyle Bond located the house and modeled it for the SAMRA layout.

Director and Department Reports

Treasurer

by Steve Sandifer, MMR
steve.sandifer@sbcglobal.net

The primary financial activity of the summer has centered around the convention. The LSR receives $10 of the registration fee for individuals registered at the convention, so that has been our income. The balance of the convention income and repayment of the $2000 loan will come very soon. We are in a strong financial position.

It was a very good convention. I thoroughly enjoyed the clinics and being with my fellow modelers. Rod and his crew exceeded my expectations.

The Cen-Tex group said they will not request the $2000 loan for their convention, but they have requested the $2000 Convention Grant that was sent their way back in May. They have big plans for next June 18-20.

Treasurer Report	Checking	CDs
June 1, 2025	**$12,963.31**	**$41,140.67**
UPS Shipping	-9.63	
Website	-22.17	
Contest Supplies & Awards	-626.21	
Non-Rails	-393.33	
Youth Awards	-80.00	
Convention Registration	950.00	
August 28, 2025	**$12,819.37**	**$41,562.39**
Outstanding Check	-37.50	

Board Advisor / Past President

by Donna Orr
donnalorrtx@gmail.com

As Board Advisor, I am enjoying my new position and the opportunities it provides to support the Lone Star Region (LSR). I remain in constant communication with members and our board, ensuring an open line of dialogue. When approached for advice, I work closely with members to provide guidance and assistance as needed. Additionally, I offer constructive feedback to help strengthen our activities and decision-making. Overall, the role has been rewarding, and I look forward to continuing to serve the LSR.

Cowcatcher Division 1

by Dick Brannan
director@cowcatcherdivision.org

The Cowcatcher Division has had a very busy summer. We had a large crowd at our annual cookout (our June meeting) enjoying the hot dogs and hamburgers cooked by our Operations Team and a very interesting video presented by Dave Steckler on the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway.

At our July meeting we had a great clinic presented by Dave Hall that was titled, "What can JMRI do for me? Car routing possibilities in OperationsPro".

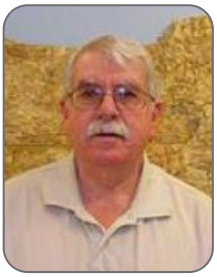
In August, Marita Richards presented a clinic on the "History of the Pullman Company" which was attended by over 50 members.

The division has a committee headed by Darrell Cowles looking at alternative ways of promoting the hobby other than attending train shows. They expect to have some concrete proposals in the fall.

Dick Brannan
Director - Cowcatcher Division

Dave Ranney cooking burgers at the Division 1 June cookout

Bayou Division 2



by Rod Fredericks
fredericks.rod@gmail.com

No report received.

Trinity River Division 3

by Jeff Rykel
jeff_rykiel@yahoo.com

For Division 3, I have assumed the Division Director role, and our meeting has moved into our new meeting location in Plano, Texas. With the new change comes a refreshing adjustment, where our new audio-visual setup takes less time than had been in the past. We are still in the process of streamlining our setup time and 1 person can complete the complex setup in about 20 minutes. We have been using the system with a high level of success for those members who may face mobility challenges or distant travel.

Our attendance over the past few meetings has been met with great enthusiasm. Our most recent meetings being a fan favorite as a new set of new make and take clinics are currently underway. We will be reviewing more make and take clinics for the upcoming year to develop even more skill sets among our members. Topics include everything from track laying, wiring, soldering, general layout design, and basic and advanced scenery, just to name a few. We will update during the course of the clinics.

We've had 2 simple clinics since the move and the more in-depth are currently underway. We look forward to even more intuitive clinics and demonstrations in the future.

Our Division has started to update the clinics and demonstrations we provide for the Plano Train Show both in Oct and Jan time frames. The same topics have been used for quite a while and we have felt that we should be directing our audience toward the "Introduction" of topics rather than advanced discussions in the hobby. The hope here is to attract more individuals not only to our local Divisions here in North Texas, but also to the NMRA as well. Look for upcoming changes to the booth and discussion points during our basic demo sections.

We've had a quiet quarter with regards to awards, but looking to get back on track for the latter half of this year.

Our Division is looking forward to working with Division 1 during the Plano Train show. Stop by the booth and say hello.

Cen-Tex Division 4

by Doug Taylor
director@centexnmra.org

Greetings from Division 4!

We are making great progress on the 2026 LSR Convention. To check out our initial presentation just go to: connections2026.com. We anticipate opening Early Bird registration VERY soon, so watch for the announcement in an email and on the web site.

The convention will have some great clinics, special guests, and a captivating guest speaker. There should also be enough layouts and operating sessions for everyone, plus plenty to do with prototype tours, non-rail functions, contests and more. To keep up to date, just bookmark connections2026.com in your browser!

Keep in mind that the Regional Convention is a benefit for the entire Region and we still have room for more volunteers. As an added

bonus, you can earn AP credit for volunteering! Great things can happen when dedicated people put their minds to the task.

We have had a number of members do clinics at our meetings to share their knowledge with the Division, as well as quite a few showing their amazing layouts during layout tours. At our meetings we also have time set aside for members to bring in projects they are working on to show the membership. There have been some excellent models shown and the Q&A after each is presented is informative to all.

The next meeting for the division will be September 13th at the Austin NW Rec center. The meeting will start at 10:00 and as always it will be broadcast live on Zoom.

Doug

West Texas Division 5

by Brooks Willig
headroadie2004@gmail.com

I have started holding monthly Zoom meetings in a new format. I find it is going well, with the format being well-received and fostering participation from all who join. We have had some new regulars join the last few months.

The new monthly format includes these segments:

1. **Division and Regional Updates**
   A brief highlight of upcoming Division and Regional events. These are already detailed in our monthly newsletter, so this segment will be kept short to conserve time.
2. **Trivia Time**
   A quick bit of railroad-related trivia or an interesting fact from the hobby to spark interest and discussion.
3. **New and Noteworthy Products**
   A look at up to three new or interesting product announcements that may be of interest to modelers.
4. **Discussion topic**
   A topic to spur discussion for the evening.
5. **Modeling Tips and Tricks**
   An opportunity for members to share techniques, tools, or strategies that make modeling more enjoyable or efficient.
6. **What's On Your Bench?**
   A show-and-tell style segment where members can share current projects, progress, and questions. This is a great chance to seek advice or simply inspire others.

NMRA LSR Division 5 meets on the third Monday of each month at 7:00 PM (Central Time). Meetings are held entirely online using Zoom. To receive meeting announcements, reminders, the Zoom link, and other Division updates, please sign up at the following link:
http://eepurl.com/hRLLm9

Brooks Willig
Division 5 Director

South Texas Division 6

by Roy Kaiser
fr8train@gvtc.com

After a couple months of lower attendance figures in the mid-twenties, we have recently rebounded to a whopping 34 on August 9th. However, regardless of numbers, the group's enthusiasm remains very high.

Every meeting is filled with model railroad-themed clinics and visual presentations. At each meeting, several members bring items they have worked on for the Show and Tell segment. We are all amazed at modeling abilities of these guys and gals.

I would like to thank Robert Thomas, Social Media Chairman, for stepping up at the last minute to lead the June 14th meeting. I had the entire program ready to go, but two days before the meeting I had to have a heart catheterization performed that resulted in a stent placement. All is well and the meeting was a great success under Robert's leadership.

At the August 9th meeting, Don Winn presented the 2025 Youth Award to Aiden Alvarez. Aiden's Award was announced at the Baton Rouge Convention in June. Chris Palmero, At-Large North American Director for the NMRA Board of Directors was a special guest speaker. Chris covered several items related to NMRA Conventions and the various crusades of the NMRA Organization in general. After the meeting, I opened my own HO scale Cincinnati & Virginia Railway layout to the group and I was delighted when 22 of the 34 attendees made the 45 minute trip north to visit the C&V.

Over the past 10 months, Don Winn has taken it upon himself to conduct off-site Make N' Take modeling clinics. The first was a small scratch build project where participants scratch built an HO or N scale track car shed out of plastic stock.

He later went on to do a kitbash type project on DPM and Walthers Modulars. Next month he will do a third project with DPM non-modular kits. He takes his MMR duties very seriously when it comes to helping others to spread the art and joy of model railroading.

Roy Kaiser

(Above) Chris Palmero, NMRA Board Member, talks to the Division 6 group about National conventions and the NMRA's vision for the future.

Aiden Alvarez
Part of the Texas Transportation museum since he was 2 years old
Currently spends his weekend helping support the museum activites
s the G scale trains without
ervision
ns and follows directions
acts with the public in a very
tive way

(Left) Aiden Alvarez accepts the 2025 Youth Award, presented by Don Winn, in Division 6.

Just a small part of the group who visited Roy Kaiser's Cincinnati & Virginia HO scale layout after the Division 6 meeting.

North Louisiana Division 7

by Don P. Kimmell
elf4kcs@me.com

No report received.

At-Large Director

by Michael Harang
miharang@gmail.com

No report received.

Achievement Program

by Duane Richardson, MMR
pinecreekstation@verizon.net

Congratulations to the folks listed below on receiving their AP certificates and especially to Darrell, John, and Steve for earning Master Model Railroader.

You can start - or continue - *your* journey towards earning Master Model Railroader today by just picking up that pen and filling out your AP paperwork. You can do it!

Texas Gulf Division 8

by Phil Stewart
pstewart1225@yahoo.com

No report received.

At-Large Director

by Don Winn, MMR
donswinn@gmail.com

No report received.

At-Large Director

by Deborah Gifford
817-805-7067
gifforddeborah5@gmail.com

No report received.

AP Report

Certificate	Number	Awardee
Master Builder - Motive Power	LSR #915	Steve Jackobs
Master Builder - Motive Power	LSR #919	Darrell Cowles
Master Builder - Motive Power	LSR #922	John Garfield
Master Builder - Cars	LSR #913	Steve Jackobs
Master Builder - Scenery	LSR #921	Edward McGinley
Master Builder - Scenery	LSR #918	Jim Archer
Master Builder - Scenery	LSR #914	Steve Jackobs
Chief Dispatcher	LSR #917	David Kranda
Chief Dispatcher	LSR #923	John Garfield
MASTER MODEL RAILROADER	MMR #802	Darrell Cowles
MASTER MODEL RAILROADER	MMR #806	John Garfield
MASTER MODEL RAILROADER	MMR #807	Steve Jackobs

Contests

by Ray Byer and Jeff Palmer, MMR
raybyer@yahoo.com
res06wqv@gte.net

(Report published on pages 24-29)

Contests

by Joe Leising
joe@leising.com

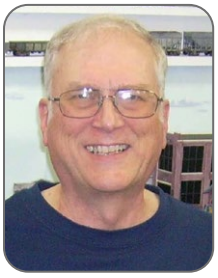
The Blues Express 2025 convention in Baton Rouge is now behind us. I would like to thank LSR Bayou Division 2 Director Rod Fredericks and his family for the work that they did in preparing for the convention. Chuck Lind for put together a fantastic clinic schedule that was enjoyed by all. Thank you to everyone that participated in the Blues Express 2025 LSR Convention for supporting the LSR Bayou Division and the NMRA Lone Star Region.

Our next stop is the Connections 2026 Convention, hosted by the LSR Cen-Tex Division 4. The convention will take place on June 18-21, 2026 at the Wyndham Garden Inn on Interstate 35 and Woodward Avenue, minutes from downtown Austin. Mark you calendar and save the dates! Cen-Tex Division 4 Division Director Doug Taylor and his convention committee have been meeting by-weekly planning the arrangements for what is sure to be an amazing LSR Convention. The convention's discounted hotel reservations are already available on the convention's website, and convention registration will be opening soon. Convention updates will be posted as they are confirmed. Visit Connections2026.com for a humorous introduction, and then check back often for convention updates. Also watch for eblasts and information in *The Marker Lamp*.

Exciting news for the Lone Star Region is that Peter Kazmir and Speed Muller are working on a easy to use convention website format, that can be used for future conventions, without having to start at square 1. This will help creating a convention website, without knowing all the little details that it takes to put a website together. Peter is using the Connections 2026 convention as a beta test, and once everything has been worked out, I will be adding "how to" information to the LSR's Convention Planning Guide.

I look forward to connecting with everyone at the Connection 2026 LSR Convention in Austin, TX on June 18-21, 2026. Remember to watch for convention registration and updates at Connections2026.com.

Education



by Robert Mangrum, MMR
1txsouthrr@gmail.com

I'm just settling into my new role. Basically we need to document our education outreach program as part of our 501(c)3 education certification, So: If your division has monthly meetings with clinics (aka programs) we are asking you to document these for me. The easiest way is to simply send the invitations to each meeting that you already send to Division members.

I know that most Divisions are hosting monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly meetings. Bob Sabol is point of contact for the all-NMRA San Jacinto Club.

If your area has a train show hosted by an NMRA group those count too so please send a list of clinics. If the Divisions would do this as the months pass, the annual report will be easy to collate for LSR records. Thanks!

Membership

by Jared Roberts
940-765-1836
jlroberts0418@gmail.com

Sadly, we've had six members pass away since the last issue, and no rerails. However, membership is growing slowly in some Divisions.

Membership Report

	2024					2025							
Division	**Aug**	**Sep**	**Oct**	**Nov**	**Dec**	**Jan**	**Feb**	**Mar**	**Apr**	**May**	**Jun**	**Jul**	**Aug**
One	172	168	167	172	166	171	166	167	164	160	158	157	154
Two	83	83	83	84	84	81	81	81	82	84	83	84	83
Three	178	175	167	166	166	171	173	171	168	166	169	167	168
Four	130	132	131	128	124	129	128	126	126	129	130	130	131
Five	29	29	29	28	27	28	30	28	27	28	27	28	28
Six	76	75	72	76	77	75	77	74	74	73	74	74	72
Seven	21	21	21	21	21	22	23	22	22	23	23	23	23
Eight	199	200	198	195	192	194	194	193	197	196	195	189	190
LSR Total	**888**	**883**	**868**	**870**	**857**	**871**	**872**	**862**	**860**	**859**	859	**852**	**849**

GREATER HOUSTON TRAIN SHOW

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2026 10:00 – 4:00

Pasadena Convention Center

7902 Fairmont Parkway, Pasadena, TX 77504
East of Beltway 8 on Fairmont Parkway

Adults $10 - Youth $5 - Maximum $15 per household

Operating Layouts, Classes on Railroads and Modeling Subjects, National Model Railroad Association Contest, and Vendors from across the Southwest.

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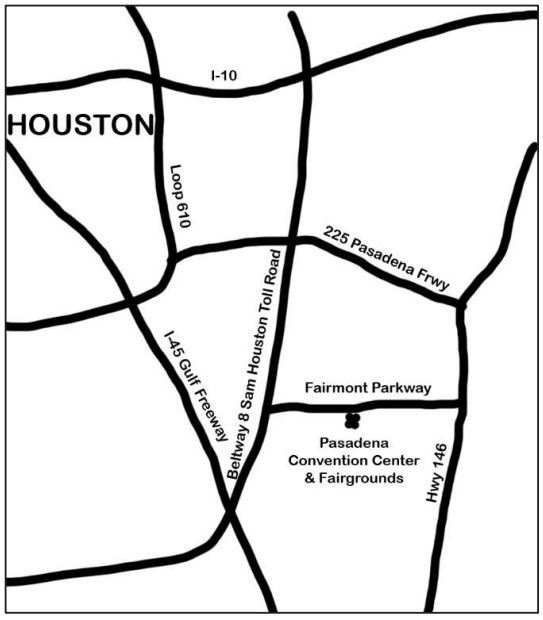
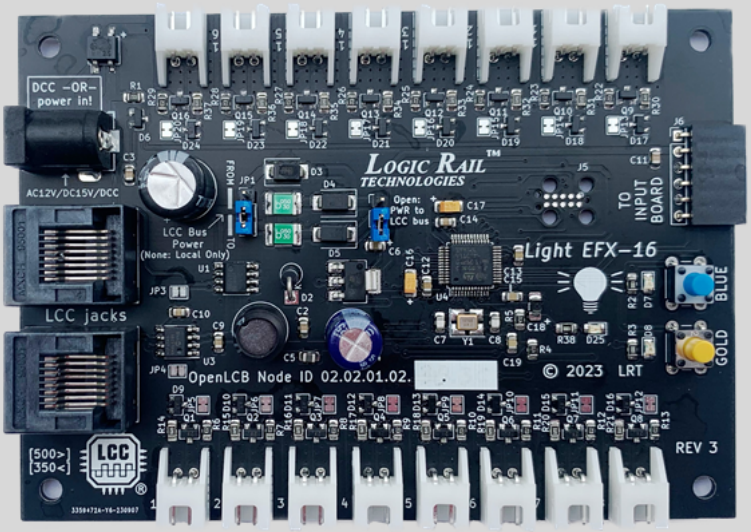
Chairman: Steve Sandifer; steve.sandifer@sbcglobal.net
Table Sales: Robert Ashcraft: crash8473@comcast.net

http://sanjacmodeltrains.org



Light EFX-16



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Walt Rieger's Southern Rathole Division; Peter Kazmir Photo

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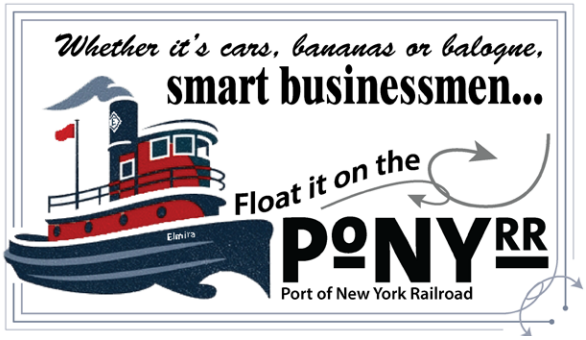
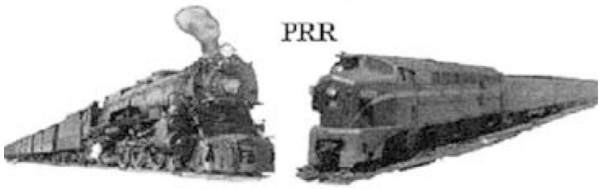


Riley Triggs | ponyrr.blogspot.com

THE ALLEGHENY RAILROAD
HORSESHOE CURVE
ALTOONA



Jerry Schoenberg
Carrollton, Texas (972) 242-9053
arrjerry@aol.com

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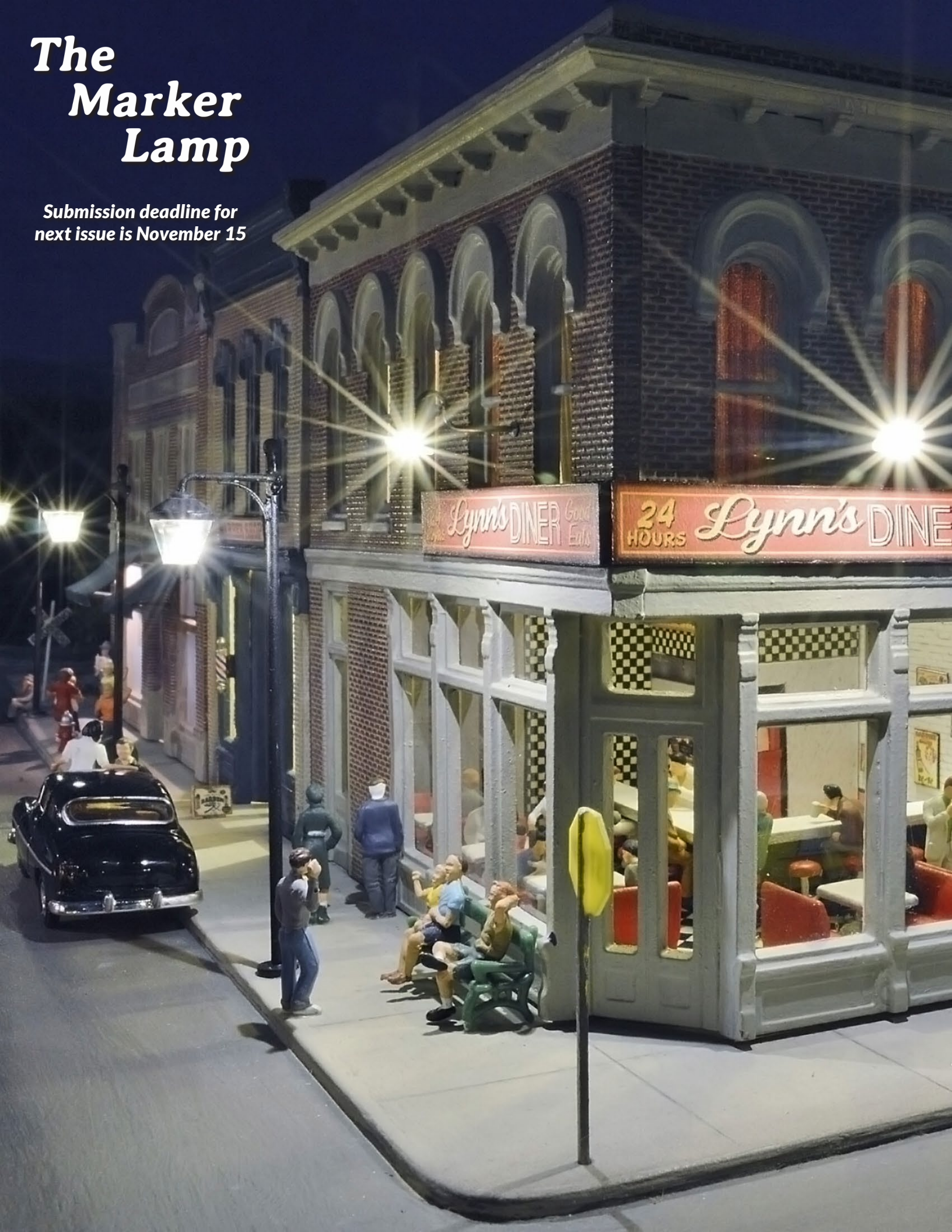
There's plenty of room for more - add your pike today!

The Marker Lamp

Submission deadline for next issue is November 15